

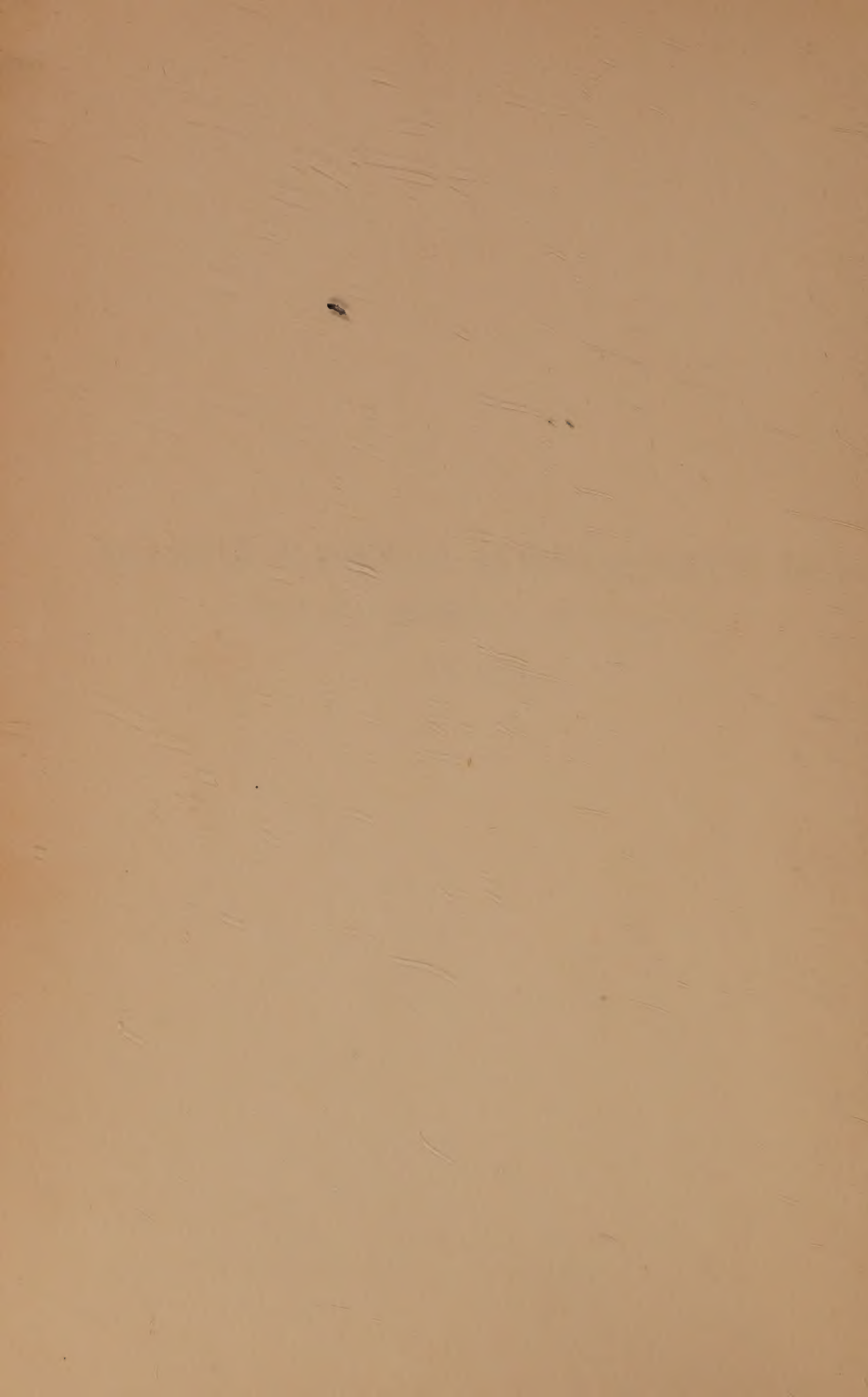
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VOL. VI





Madame Louise de France.

1748.

From the painting by Nattier at Versailles.

Rogers and French, Trilmer & Co. Ltd.

MADAME
LOUISE DE FRANCE

BY
LÉON DE LA BRIÈRE

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION BY
META AND MARY BROWN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
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JOSEPH WILHELM, S.T.D.,

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Vicarius Generalis.

Westmonasterii,
die 11 Augusti, 1906.

TRANSLATORS' PREFACE

WE have many books which paint for us the dark side of the reign of Louis XV. ; and indeed the dark side is only too painfully apparent. The splendours of the reign of Louis XIV. had hidden the canker that was eating into the heart of French society. When, however, the "grand monarque" had passed away and the regency fell into the hands of the profligate Duc D'Orleans, all veils of even exterior decency were cast aside, and the Court of France became a scandal to the world. For a short time, after reaching his majority, the young King endeavoured to fulfil the duties of his high office. Unfortunately the effort did not last long, and soon Louis sank even deeper than his predecessor into the depths of vice and ignominy. France and her people were forgotten whilst her King drowned all sense of duty in the whirl of his vile pleasures.

Such is the picture history has handed down to us of the Court of Louis XV.

Yet in the midst of this heartless, godless frivolity, in the very Palace of Versailles, was a little group who lived untainted by a single breath of the corruption around them. This group consisted of the neglected Queen, Marie Leczinska, and her daughters.

This little book which we have translated for English readers tells the life-story of one of these daughters, and gives a glimpse of this tiny Court within a Court, where history had not time to linger. It throws a curious light on the private life of Louis XV., and perhaps some will be surprised to see flashes of virtue which might have made Louis a great and good man.

We may remark as a characteristic of French life, and no doubt of life in other southern Catholic countries, that even where the practice of faith is altogether neglected, and faith itself seems hardly existent, there is yet an undercurrent which at supreme moments will come to the surface. Centuries have rooted the faith so deeply that it is in their very blood.

With these brief words we may leave our readers to form an opinion of the book for themselves.

M. B.
ARD. CAIEN.

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MADAME LOUISE DE FRANCE

CHAPTER I

VERSAILLES TO ST. DENIS

It was Spy Wednesday—the Champs Elysées presented a brilliant spectacle in the spring sunshine, as the beautiful carriages of duchesses, ladies, and actresses rolled along it—shell-shaped carriages of mother-of-pearl, drawn by horses in gilt trappings, carriages of painted porcelain whereon were depicted doves pecking at roses, or winged cupids surrounded by butterflies and flowers. On the Boulevard crowds were collected, for this was the day appointed for the “Premier Longchamps,” the great procession in which year after year Paris and Versailles vied with each other in their splendour.

From group to group a wondrous piece of news spread like wildfire. It had been given out on good authority, and was eagerly discussed by the nobles and beautiful ladies who were watching the procession.

Madame Louise, youngest daughter of the King, was this very morning to leave Versailles to enter religion.

So ran the report. To verify it, let us go to St. Denis, near Paris.

2 MADAME LOUISE DE FRANCE

In this town twenty-seven ladies lived together lives of the utmost severity. They were reformed Carmelites, and interpreted the rules of the Order so strictly that their convent was called "La Trappe du Carmel." Also the poor nuns were almost penniless, and in want of all but the barest necessities of life.

Though the monastery possessed an enclosure and most magnificent armorial bearings, the nuns had absolutely no resources. The dowries of the old nuns were exhausted and there was no prospect of novices. Black want stared them in the face. How different is this picture from that of the extravagance and luxury at Longchamps and Versailles.

So great was their poverty and so many their debts that the regular inspectors, or, in theological language the apostolic visitors, intended to break up the community and divide the nuns among less sorely tried convents of the Order.

It was certainly not the self-indulgence of its nuns or their unnecessary expenditure which had impoverished the convent. Water mixed with a little thin cider was their only drink, and for food they used the vegetables that grew in their own garden. They were clothed in sacks sewn together, and they slept on straw. Wretched tallow candles gave them light, they dug their own ground, cut down and saved their own fire-wood, and mended their own windows. But in spite of this most rigorous daily economy they were now quite destitute.

Mademoiselle Craig, the Mother Prioress who succeeded Mademoiselle de Viole and Mademoiselle de Dillon, was a valiant Irishwoman who had entered from the Court of James II. Knowing that their great and continued wants had wearied

even their most charitable friends, she relied no more on human aid. The blow seemed indeed about to fall. She was in debt for the wood required, not indeed for heating the monastery, but for the kitchen, infirmary, and laundry, and a warrant to seize their goods had been served on the Sister who begged out of doors for the convent.

In their dismay the nuns made a vow that they would offer a special Novena of Penance and prayers every year to petition the Blessed Virgin, Queen of Carmel, for a postulant sufficiently well endowed to free them from their pressing want. Tradition even adds that a lay Sister was heard to murmur, as though giving a challenge, "We demand to be freed from debt, and for such a miracle we need for a postulant a Princess of France."

Now on Wednesday in Holy Week, which fell on the 11th of April in the year 1770, a carriage from Versailles drove into the outer court of the convent at 9 o'clock, the hour for Community Mass, and from it alighted two ladies assisted by an equerry. Of these ladies one was Madame Louise of France, daughter of the King.

The youngest daughter of Louis XV. was now thirty-three years old, having been born on the 18th July 1737. She had keen bright eyes and a pleasant face, but one of her shoulders was undoubtedly slightly higher than the other. She exaggerated this, of course, when she spoke of her hump. The accident which thus altered her figure happened while Madame Louise was living with her sisters in the Abbey of Fontevrault. One morning her attendant came late to dress her, and the little Princess, always independent and energetic, decided to get up alone. She tried to climb the carved

railing which surrounded her bed, but fell and was found unconscious on the floor.

The Royal Abbey of Fontevrault was at the head of sixty other houses of the Order. Its abbesses, by special privilege, ruled large communities of men and of women. They had often been Princesses of Orleans or Bourbon. Several Princesses of France were being educated there at the same time—yet the only doctor was the village barber.

Although it was supposed that motives of economy had induced Cardinal Fleury, the then Minister, to have the little Princesses educated with the Benedictines of Fontevrault, yet they were treated with all the ceremonial due to their rank. At table, the Abbess served them standing. Mademoiselle de Montemart, daughter of the Duke of Vivonne, was Abbess at this time. She was created Duchess specially in order that she might approach the Princesses.

The pension for each of the Princesses was 1500 francs, and they had 2000 francs each for pocket-money. Their Court consisted of ten waiting-women, a squire, a steward, a bodyguard of twelve men, a police-officer, M. D'Autichamps, and professors of music and dancing. The dancing-master, M. de Caix, taught them the *Menuet*, *Couleur de Rose*. In their stables they had two carriages and a light vehicle called a gondola, with an outrider, coachmen, postillions, grooms, footmen, thirty-two horses and four donkeys—but they had no doctor.

The barber surgeon saw the child and declared that no bad results would follow. His opinion was too readily believed, and Madame Louise, in spite of all the care bestowed on her afterwards, remained all her life slightly inclined to the left. Attended

by the same ignorant physician an elder sister of Madame Louise died of small-pox.

Her accident in no way altered the agreeable expression of Madame Louise. On her return from the Convent of Fontevault, her mother, Marie Leczinska, wrote of her: "I have never seen so sweet, so touching a face as the little one's, though it is pinched with sadness. There is something moving, gentle, and spiritual about her." Again, in the Memoirs of a cotemporary, the Duc de Luynes, we find these words: "Madame Louise has fine features, and seems to be of a lively disposition." And in Barbier's Journal: "Madame Louise is smaller than her sisters, not so fair, but still pretty, and she has gaiety and wit."

The charm she possessed as a child did not desert her in girlhood, though she describes herself, later in life, in terms which we must not take seriously: "Your servant," she wrote to the Carmelites of Brussels, "is very small, she has a large head, big forehead, black eyebrows, eyes of any colour, blue, grey, or brown, a great hooked nose and a puckered chin. She is round as a ball and hunch-backed." Her face, on the contrary, as can be seen from her portraits in the Versailles Museum, was a noble one. In one picture she is wearing a blue dress and is seated reading a book; in the other, Nattier has portrayed her in a yellow dress, trimmed with fur. In both these pictures the features are expressive, pleasant, and full of kindly vivacity.

The Empress Maria Theresa of Austria had information to this effect, and desired the hand of Madame Louise in marriage for her fourth son, the Archduke Maximilian. Maria Theresa had also eight daughters, one of whom was Marie Antoinette.

The Prince of Kaunitz was sent to negotiate the affair at Versailles. But Madame Louise refused the offer formally, and it is said that she even exaggerated the inequality of her shoulders before the Prince, who was annoyed at the ill-success of his mission.

After this check the Archduke Maximilian retired from the world and joined the Teutonic Order, a religious and military body like the Order of the Knights of Malta. Later on he became Grand Master, and eventually was made Archbishop of Cologne. Madame Louise must have possessed the power of pleasing to have become the object of this young Prince's affections.

It is hardly necessary to contradict the romantic stories which have ascribed, more or less vaguely to the Princess, an attachment to Charles Edward, the last of the Stuarts. After his campaign in Scotland and fatal defeat at Culloden, he was received by the King of France. Though it is true that Louis XV. eventually sacrificed the prospects and even the person of the young Pretender to the rancour of the winning side, though he drove him from the French frontier, yet at first he accorded him true hospitality, and his welcome at Court was of the warmest. Louis, his Queen and their children were moved to tears at the sad tales of war told them by the charming young hero. The Lockhart papers insinuate that one of the Princesses was more interested in the narrator than in his narrative. Be that as it may, and on it was built the whole romance, it is a fact attested by M. Amédé Pichot, in his *History of Charles Edward*, that Madame Louise was at this time but ten years old and residing in the Abbey of Fontevrault, eighty leagues from the Court. So vanishes that pretty story as far as our heroine is concerned.

There is another story, not less unlikely, reaped from the fertile imagination of Madame Dash. Here the hero is no Stuart, but an English Prince of the rival house, Henry, Duke of Cumberland, young brother of George III. The Countess Dash writes that this young prince, graceful, handsome, and successful, made a strong impression on the youngest daughter of Louis XV.

Though a certain freedom is accorded to novelists, there can be no doubt that this lady has pushed the licence beyond its limits. In none of the memoirs of the time—and God knows that the eighteenth century was not particular in the matter of charity—in no tradition or contemporary recital, can the shadow of a foundation be discovered for this story. It sprang from a brain more remarkable for inventive genius than historical accuracy. Even ignorance and credulity would hesitate to believe that a well-brought-up Catholic Princess, a serious and religious girl, should desire to marry a foolish young Protestant Prince—a youth well known for his extravagant admiration of opera-girls.

We may safely leave this fantastic piece of fiction in the obscurity in which it has rested for so many years. I found it in the National Library, where it had been slumbering in the peace it merited. Apparently I was the first to read it, the pages on which it was set forth being uncut and untouched though yellow with age.

Each of the daughters of Louis XV. had a regular Court, consisting of the following ladies: one tire-woman or mistress of robes, ten ladies-in-waiting, and a lady to read aloud. Over this little Court presided a maid of honour. This last position was filled in the Court of Madame Louise by the Duchess de Civrac.

And, in truth, it was no sinecure, for in addition to her other duties this lady was charged with the distribution of alms—a responsible task. She had full control of the Princess's pocket-money, and had to distribute it with discrimination amongst the poor. No account was required of her, and Madame Louise never touched the smallest sum of her own money. One day she borrowed a louis from one of her ladies, and for this she never ceased to reproach herself.

The Princess de Ghisteltes, alone of all her ladies, was permitted to accompany Madame Louise on this 11th of April. She was born at Melun in greater Spain. Her husband's title, a German one, conferred on him by that Empire in 1760, would not have been recognised in France had he not received permission from the King to retain it. This lady with her niece, the Countess d'Hinnisdal, suffered afterwards for their friendship with the Royal family in the Bourbe and other prisons of the Revolution.

Madame Louise came to St. Denis in a plain travelling-carriage, unaccompanied by pages or escort. She changed horses at Sèvres, and arrived at her destination in two hours, having left Versailles at seven in the morning. She wore a simple silk dress and a hood with a bow.

The Carmelites were not much surprised to see the Princess on this holy day. It was a custom with the pious daughters of the King often to visit their mother's tomb at St. Denis, and they usually on these occasions spent some time at the convent. Marie Leczinska herself had often brought her children to see the nuns; for in her conjugal troubles she used to seek advice and comfort from the holy Sisters. The rule made an exception in admitting persons of Royal blood within the cloister.

The nuns all came together to pay homage to the King's daughter. Madame Louise did not this day make use of her privilege of bringing her ladies with her into the cloister, but asked the Princess de Ghistelles and her equerry to await without while she passed the door of the enclosure alone, and went to the Chapter room. Here she responded with ease and affection to the greeting of the nuns, and asked them to pray specially for her during Mass. She then preceded them to the choir, which was railed off from the body of the chapel. Here, instead of using the carpet and cushions prepared for her, she knelt humbly on the floor during the whole of Mass.

The Princess remained kneeling in prayer as the nuns, much edified by the devotion of their visitor, left the church. But presently the convent bell called them from their various duties, and they reassembled in the parlour. Here they were met by their Superior, the Abbé Bertin, a man of courage and piety, and a counsellor of State. He was a brother of the celebrated Bertin de Bellisle.

The Carmelites of St. Denis had recently elected the Abbé Bertin for their Superior; his predecessor was the Bishop de la Motte, who was now confined by old age to the care of his diocese. Their new Superior, with much emotion, related to the nuns the astounding news—Madame Louise was never more to leave them: from that moment Carmel was to be her home. She wished to give herself to God, to live in their house, under the rule of St. Theresa, like the humblest among them.

After the first shock of surprise the Prioress asked the Abbé Bertin about Madame's vocation. He reassured her. "A few days ago," he said, "when I was staying with my brother at Versailles I had a

long interview with Madame Louise. She told me that her resolution was no new one, but that she had long contemplated this step. Madame, as you know, was educated at the Abbey of Fontevault, founded by the Blessed Robert D'Arbrissel. She remained there till she was fourteen years old, under the special care of Madame de Soulanges, now Abbess of Royal Lieu, a nun with whose piety and merit I am well acquainted. When she was a child, having recovered from a severe illness through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, she made a vow to wear white for one year. Later on, she fell from her horse while out hunting near Compiègne, and narrowly escaped being run over by her sister's carriage, which was following too closely. She once more attributed her escape to Our Lady, and made another vow in gratitude. Her holy mother, the Queen, whose loss we all deplore, surrounded the Princess with an atmosphere of sanctity. As for her special call to the religious life, she first felt it on the 7th October 1751. On that day she went with her mother to the Carmelite Convent in the Rue de Grenelle to witness the reception of your sister, Thais of Mercy, who had been a lady of the Court, the Dowager Countess of Rupelmonde. The call she felt that day has echoed in her heart ever since."

"Why then," asked the Prioress, "has the Princess delayed to fulfil her vocation for more than eighteen years?"

"It was the wish of the Archbishop, Monsieur de Beaumont," answered the Abbé. "She told no one else, and he, renowned as he is for sanctity and wisdom, deemed it more prudent to wait, since the importance of her position rendered her resolution doubly grave. Then, when one by one so many of

her relations died,—her three sisters, her two young nephews, her brother the Dauphin, and sister-in-law the Dauphiness, her grandfather, King Stanislaus of Poland, and, finally, her mother, our lamented Queen,—he thought it better to postpone a new separation, which would be very painful to the Royal family. Madame Louise obeyed him, and has waited patiently though sorrowfully. She has lived a resigned life at Court in the performance of works of piety and charity, but she has never ceased to long for the cloister. She has come to you the moment she received permission from her Director.”

“But how,” asked the Prioress, “can a Princess accustomed to command, accustomed to the homage and respect of the greatest ladies in the land, accommodate herself to our rules, of which she knows nothing?”

The Abbé replied: “Madame Louise is fully acquainted with your rules; she has a copy of them under lock and key, and this she often reads and meditates on in the solitude of her room. She is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of St. Theresa. She thought at first of entering the Order of the Visitation, so dear to her mother on account of its devotion to the Sacred Heart. But, on reflection, she came to the conclusion that she had not the natural aptitude for teaching required of the Visitation nuns. Fearing to be made Abbess, her humility prevented her entering the Benedictines at Fontevrault or Montivilliers, but here she knows that the Prioress is elected and only holds the position temporarily. So it is with her eyes open that she has chosen Carmel.”

The Prioress wondered how any one so delicately organised would stand the severities of the rule. She learned that Madame Louise had been secretly

practising mortification at Versailles. "She is accustomed," said the Abbé, "to take those things she least likes at table, to do without a fire, to overcome her disgust at the smell of tallow candles. She recites the Divine Office every day. She makes use of hair-cloth, and of the discipline, and beneath her Court robes she wears a serge chemise."

"God be praised," murmured the poor nuns.

The Abbé Bertin went on to tell how the King had received the news of his daughter's vocation. "Every one knows," he said, "how the King loves his youngest daughter. He does not give her up without a wrench. On the 2nd February last, Monsieur de Beaumont told him, and him alone, the resolution of the Princess, which up to that time he had kept a profound secret. The information moved His Majesty to tears, and he would give no answer for a fortnight. After this delay he wrote a letter to his daughter which I will read to you :

"VERSAILLES, 16th February 1770.

"The Archbishop, my dear daughter, has communicated your desire to me, and I am sure he will have told you my reply. If it is for God alone I cannot set myself in opposition to His will nor to your determination. You must have reflected deeply during the eighteen years you have waited. I have no more to ask of you. It appears that you have even made your arrangements, and you may tell your sisters whenever you wish. Compiègne is out of the question ; it is for you to decide on any other place, and I would be sorry to oppose you on that head. My sacrifice is a forced one, but yours is voluntary, and God will give you strength for your new life ; for, the deed once done, there can be no turning back. I embrace you with all my heart, dear daughter, and give you my blessing."

"God be praised," said the Prioress with clasped hands. But she was still anxious. Had Louis given his daughter special permission to enter this convent

of St. Denis? Had she acquainted His Majesty with her choice?

Yes, the Princess had foreseen everything. She had written to her father, who was then at the Castle of Choisy, telling him that she had chosen to enter this convent on account of its poverty and severity.

The Abbé read aloud the King's reply :

5th April 1770.

I embrace you with all my heart, dearest daughter. I send you the Royal Order for your departure which you asked of me.

The only condition the King demanded was that his daughter's postulanship might be prolonged for three months beyond the usual time. Thus doubt was no longer possible. The daughter of Louis XV. had really come to share the terrible austerities of these humble women. The nuns lifted their hearts in silent gratitude to God.

Meanwhile the Prioress and the other dignitaries of the convent went to the choir, where the Princess awaited them. She saluted them in silence and accompanied them to where the Carmelites were gathered together. Then she knelt down humbly among them and begged to be received as a postulant. Much moved, the Prioress raised her, she and all the nuns in turn embraced her, and the new postulant was given her name in religion : Thérèse of St. Augustin. Theresa, as every one knows, is the name of that Mystic Spaniard who heroically reformed the Carmelites. St. Augustine was the patron of the Abbé Bertin ; so Madame Louise, his first recruit, became in this way the god-daughter of their new Superior. From this hour the Princess always signed herself by her name in religion.

A professed religious was given charge of the

Princess, to guide and counsel her in the first days of her probation. This nun, her "angel," was named Julie de MacMahon. She was a charming young woman, full of vivacity and grace as well as piety. She was of the blood of the old kings of Ireland, and specially fitted for her intimate relation with the Princess, her only brother having died at the battle of Lawfield, fighting for the King of France. Miss MacMahon was so calm and even-tempered that she had earned the title of "Sister Pleasant." She remained all her life the dearest and most intimate friend of the Princess, and died in her arms.

We get much precious information about Madame Louise's life at St. Denis from the frank letters of this "angel" to her god-mother in Flanders, Madame de Fromont. This correspondence is preserved in the Archives of Lille, and amplifies what we know of Madame Louise from other sources—from tradition, the convent records, the personal memoirs of Carmelites cotemporary with her, and above all from her own letters. Two of the Princess's early companions at St. Denis, Mademoiselle de Hillerin and Mademoiselle Hesselin de Mergé, lived through the evil times of the Revolution, which they passed, one at the Convent of Moncalieri in Piedmont, and the other at that of Ségovie in Spain. After the Reign of Terror they returned to France, and were both more than ninety years old when they died in the reign of Louis Philippe. These good old nuns left written memoirs of their convent of St. Denis for future generations to read, and it was these personal records which inspired the present work.

Having welcomed their new Sister the nuns went back to their usual tasks, while the Princess proceeded

to the parlour to dismiss her attendants, and to charge them with many loving messages for her family. Madame de Ghistelles fainted with surprise and agitation, and when she recovered consciousness implored Madame to return to Versailles. She said that the just anger of the King would fall on her head and on that of the equerry. But Madame Louise gently reassured her, and gave her a note in the King's hand which ordered the ladies and escort who accompanied his daughter Louise to obey her in all things, since what she did was with his knowledge and permission. She then gave her letters for the Court, in which she thanked her father and begged her sisters to forgive her, for that it was to spare them the sorrow of saying farewell that she had kept her resolution secret. Before leaving the parlour she assured Madame de Ghistelles and the equerry that the King would provide for all who had formed her household.

And Louis certainly did not delay the fulfilment of his promise to watch over the interests of all who had served his daughter in the world. Among the inevitable changes in the Royal household we may notice that Mademoiselle Genet, who used to read aloud to Madame Louise, took her place in the Court of Madame Victoire. Mademoiselle Genet tells in her *Memoirs* how the Princess would prepare "*eau sucrée*" for her, would bring it to her herself while she read aloud, and would graciously ask her pardon for "tiring her young lungs."

Even the servants were not forgotten. The King had written :

I will do what you wish for your servants and carry out all your other arrangements.

To this Madame Louise replied :

It seems natural to me that my servants should be given what they would expect if I were dead, since indeed I am dead to the world, by the fact of embracing my present lot.

Louis, though he kept his word, thought that his daughter was showing rather an excess of generosity towards her people.

"I shall give your message to the Controller-General to-morrow," he wrote; "you are just, but you wish to reward your people for what they have not done. Nothing could be fairer than to give them wages, food, and perhaps a little extra, but you ask too much, especially in the present state of our Treasury. I never forget you and shall send you my answer when I have gone into the particulars."

From her first night at St. Denis the Princess slept on the bare ground. She had to go to bed before her luggage arrived. "No doubt," she said gaily, "the trouble they are in at Court has made my maids forget to send me my clothes. I don't know if I may yet wear a nun's night-cap, so I shall ask the Sister at the parlour to lend me one such as she wears herself."

Madame Louise had scarcely arrived at Carmel before she received tender farewell letters, which are still preserved, from all her family. Although these proofs of warm affection could not but give her joy, her heart was already given entirely to God. A song of joy and thankfulness, which burst from her happy heart at this time, was found after her death among her papers :

What thanks shall I render to Thee, O my God, for having brought me to your holy house at the foot of your altars. There my days shall henceforth flow. There shall I dwell to the last hour of my life. What happiness! Is it thanking Thee too much, O Lord, to offer Thee my whole life under the yoke of the Holy Rule

which I have now embraced? Why regret what I have left? It is nothing to what I have found, O my God and my all. Henceforth poverty shall be my riches, the riches which shall procure for me your eternal kingdom. How can I compare a few days of penance with glory everlasting? Yes, my Jesus, I embrace Thy Cross with all my heart. May I never be separated from it. Give me grace, Lord, to be Thy Victim. Oh, Jesus, what a lovely title! I feel myself honoured in having left the vanities of the world to be called Thy Victim.

She expresses the same joy in a letter to M. de la Motte, Bishop of Amiens :

Oh, Monseigneur, what graces God has bestowed on me! My life will not be long enough, though I consecrate it all, to render thanks to Him. I hope, Monseigneur, that you will help me by your prayers to thank God.

One of her companions wrote of her at this period: "She says she does not know what God will do for her after her profession, since already He floods her with consolation. Everything in our life seems to please her. She has picked up our ways and our expressions, and uses them with a grace which adds to the heroism of her actions." The future strengthened these dispositions. Writing to the Carmelite Prioress at Compiègne, she says : "I have not yet lost the joy that took possession of my heart when I entered this monastery"; and again: "I should rather be a Carmelite at Constantinople than return to Versailles."

We must now see what temporal advantages the entrance of the Royal Carmelite conferred on the monastery.

St. Theresa, in spite of her love of poverty, considered that permanent mendicity, such as that of the Capuchins and Dominicans, would entail great inconveniences to cloistered religious of a contemplative

order. She therefore decided that her daughters should not form a mendicant Order, but should accept any dowries, endowments, or property brought to each convent. The Parliament of Paris had admitted the Carmelites into France under Henry IV. with this precise condition. So it was quite legitimate that Madame Louise should bring certain temporal benefits with her to her convent.

The fixed dowry at St. Denis was 6000 francs (£250). Knowing this, Madame Louise gave the Prioress 12,000 francs (£500), "half for me and half for my hump," she said.

This whim of hers about her infirmity was not simply a fancy. It was in some manner justified. The monastic constitutions really forbade the acceptance of deformed or delicate persons, except in very particular cases. To understand the severity of the rule on this point, one should read the amusing instructions of St. Peter Fourrier written to another convent shortly before the time of Madame Louise :

"I fear the consequences," he wrote on the subject of a hump-backed postulant; "if you receive this girl, wealthy people of quality will be following the precedent. They will bring their daughters to you from this time forward—daughters with hump-backs and crooked shoulders. While if you refuse all, or some, they can accuse you of having already received one such. You may say: 'That is all very well, but this girl has only one shoulder a little higher than the other and there is a slight bend in the spine; there is no pain, no inconvenience, and even no deformity in the spine, only her shoulders are rather higher than other people's.' Another girl is compared to this one you have received, and you find only a small difference, a minutely larger hump, and then: 'Why 'tis only her dress is badly made. The silly dress-maker did not fit her.' Finally, she is a most intelligent girl, pious, useful, good-humoured, of good family. She must be received. Then another will come; after a few months a third, who will be no more deformed than the second—at least, perhaps a little, but not worth mentioning. We must receive her.

Undoubtedly they will come like that, in single file, and if there is any difficulty, they will get bishops to help them and princes and nobles. Think well, then, I beg of you, before you do anything in this case."

Although these words were addressed to a different community, Madame Louise, who was by no means blind to the defects of her person, understood that Carmel had been more lenient in admitting her than if she had been a daughter of the people. Thus, in showing by her generous allusion her frank and deep gratitude for a privilege of which she alone could speak, the Princess acted justly and with delicacy.

One only of her contemporaries, with more wit than human kindness, sneers at her infirmity. Madame Louise could not escape Voltaire's bitter pen, but since she was the daughter of Louis XV. he could not strike her openly. He aimed, therefore, from the side :

"If a hunch-backed old woman," he wrote, "were to present herself for admission at a convent, she would be driven away with scorn unless she could bring a large dowry."

Louis naturally desired to provide an annual allowance for his daughter besides the sum of 12,000 francs he had given for her dowry.

The Comtesse du Barry—whose disinterestedness has been praised—obtained more than 4,000,000 francs yearly from the Court Treasurer, M. de Beaujon, at this time. The daughters of the King were less extravagantly endowed. The Duc de Luynes estimates the annual outlay of each at 1,000,000 francs. In 1758, hearing how the public Treasury was drained by lavish expenditure, Madame Louise, together with her sisters, declared in writing that to avert all difficulty from their father they would willingly deprive themselves of luxuries.

The Princess was very unwilling to accept the annual pension her father insisted on. "I would rather not have a pension," she protested. "It would even be more honourable for the King. It shall be said: 'Madame Louise renounced everything when she became a Carmelite; she refused a pension, and the King, honouring her wishes, consented not to give her one.'"

After much discussion she succeeded in having the pension reduced to 24,000 francs (£1000). Still she would not accept it till she was told that it would have a definite object—that it would serve to defray the necessary expenses incurred by the convent on the occasions of visits from the Royal family. This appealed to the Princess.

"The King," she wrote, "has been good enough to settle on the house a pension of 24,000 francs for the expenses which my family may occasion should they come to visit me. . . . The allowance was to pay the expenses caused by my family."

The King always dined here, with all his suite, on his way to Compiègne, on his return thence, and several other times in the year, and he never had a repast which cost less than 2000 or 3000 francs.

The figure mentioned by the Princess seems no exaggeration. There are some interesting details on this point in the following letter from a Carmelite of St. Denis to her sisters in the Rue St. Jacques :

All the Royal family dined in our Reverend Mother's apartment. The dinner was prepared by the twenty-five cooks of M. Bertin, the Minister, and its magnificence surprised the King. There were eleven places laid, for the King, the Dauphin, the Princesses, and maids of honour. In an adjoining room were the nobles. In another the equerries; and a fourth table was set in the garden, that being outside the enclosure, for the bodyguard.

The question of finance was opened afresh when

Louis XV. died. In his will these words occur : " I wish each of my daughters to have 200,000 francs annually, besides the maintenance of their tables and houses." The old Statute ruled that when the law had recognised and sanctioned religious vows, these entailed a total renunciation by the religious of all personal property and of all inheritance. But the enjoyment of a pension for life not constituting a deed of property was permitted to regulars, above all in monasteries deprived of landed property, or other means of subsistence.

Madame Louise, then, although a religious, acquired by her father's will a right to a new pension, the same as that of her sisters. She generously renounced it ; nevertheless out of love of justice and respect for her father's memory she attached some importance to the public and official announcement of her claim, before giving it up of her own free will. Louis XVI. appointed a Royal Commission which examined both her claim and her renunciation, finding both to be legal. As soon as this decision was made known, Madame gave up her pension, and Louis, in gratitude to his aunt for her disinterestedness, rebuilt the Chapel of St. Denis at his own expense.

"A very serious quarrel," reports Mercy-Argenteau, the scandal-loving Ambassador of Maria Theresa at the French Court, "now arose between the King and the Carmelite." We see here on what a solid foundation rests this report.

It was no foolish simplicity on the part of the Princess which caused her to make these monetary sacrifices. She well understood what she did, and could give a good account of how much the Court expenses were reduced after her entry into Carmel. She wrote to her Royal nephew :

My entrance into religion has, my dear nephew, greatly relieved the Royal Treasury, for instead of the several millions I used to spend, I have now only 24,000.

The coming of Madame Louise to St. Denis extricated the house from its overwhelming distress, but the change in no way altered the strict observance of the rules. The report of the Apostolic visitor in 1781 contains this edifying testimony : “ We have seen with pleasure that the increase in their funds has not caused them to alter their simple and modest mode of life, nor has it made them lose anything of their spirit of poverty.”

Meanwhile the retirement of Madame Louise was an important event in the eyes of the world. The day after her entrance at St. Denis the fact was officially announced to His Majesty’s Ambassadors at foreign Courts by the Minister as though it were a marriage, birth, or death in the Royal family. The Duc de Choiseul, a *protégé* of the late Madame de Pompadour, was Minister at this time, and could have very little sympathy with a religious vocation. Still he wrote thus :

The deep and lasting piety of Madame Louise, youngest daughter of the King, has inspired her with the desire to enter the Carmelite Order. She has proved her vocation while living at Court, and yesterday, with the King’s consent, she entered a monastery of that Order at St. Denis. There she hopes to make her profession as a simple nun, cut off from her rank and station in the world. The King has commanded me to inform you of this touching and edifying event.

This is the last Diplomatic Circular signed by Choiseul. He ceased to be Minister on the following 25th of September.

Tradition has preserved for us some curious

reports circulated at the time about the changes made in the convent by the entrance of Madame Louise. Commoners are not supposed to live and communicate regularly with Royal personages, so it was said that since the nuns held daily intercourse with the Princess, they were, by that fact, maids of honour to her, and were, by letters patent, created Marchionesses every one. Further, the story went that the Court had sent one of its best cooks to the convent. The nuns and Madame Louise herself were greatly amused at these absurd reports.

The real wishes of Louis XV. were that a number of girls who wished to enter the convent, but were too poor, should do so, and he would give them the necessary dowries.

This generosity of the King was of great benefit to the convent, but it, at the same time, by raising the number of the community to forty, made it necessary that the nuns should obtain an unusual dispensation from the rules, which laid down that no Carmelite convent should have more than twenty nuns. St. Theresa's reason for this rule was her desire that her nuns should live like hermits and not become members of large and important communities.

Clement XIV., Ganganelli, had just been elected Pope. He was still struggling—painfully—against the efforts of the impious for the suppression of the Jesuits and had not yet succumbed. He sent his portrait and special blessing to Madame Louise through Archbishop Giraux of Damascus, the Papal Nuncio in Paris. In a second letter, dated 18th July, he congratulated Louis on his daughter's vocation. In a third he charged the Nuncio to be present at her profession. The Pope also asked for a picture of the Princess, and wrote to her as follows :

We have had several copies made of your picture, so that such great virtue may be made known to all, and that so worthy an example may be admired and followed.

It was the rule in the French Carmelite convents not to confer the habit on their postulants till they had had three months' trial in secular costume. These three months and the additional three stipulated for by Louis XV., being ended, Madame Louise, kneeling humbly in the centre of the Chapter room, begged that she might be admitted to the holy habit: "My Mother and Sisters I humbly beg of your charity to receive me into the holy habit of religion in spite of my unworthiness, but I hope with the grace of God, and with the help of your holy prayers, to do better in the future than I have done in the past."

The scene made a deep impression on the Carmelites present.

"What tears we shed," writes Mademoiselle de MacMahon, "when she received the holy habit; but how could we help it when we saw a great Princess come into the Chapter room, and kneeling, with hands joined and eyes cast down, humbly beg that she might be invested in the holy habit! It was a sight to fill heaven itself with rapture."

A Synod of the Clergy was then being held in Paris. All the bishops wished to assist at the reception, and the King, contrary to his daughter's wishes, insisted on the ceremony being one of great magnificence.

The Marquis de Dreux Brézé was ordered to decorate the poor little chapel of St. Denis with the Royal tapestries, draping them over stalls and benches. Thirty of the King's musicians were sent to the convent, and the Carmelites of the Rue St. Jacques who possessed and still possess St. Theresa's

own mantle, lent it to their sisters of St. Denis, that it might be used at the clothing of Madame Louise.

The 10th of September was fixed for the ceremony of reception. The Princess was surrounded by the ladies of her Court for the last time. She wore a magnificent Court robe, with panels of cloth of silver, trimmed with flowers of the same metal, coloured to look like rubies. Her hair, neck, and arms were adorned by the Crown jewels. Marie Antoinette, the new and charming Dauphine, sat on the throne, and beside her were her first almoner, the Bishop of Chartres, and her first equerry, the Comte de Tessé. After a discourse from M. de la Rivière, Bishop of Troyes, and the solemn prayers and questions of the Nuncio, Madame Louise retired, was divested of her Court dress, and had her hair cut off. But we had better quote the naïve description of an eye-witness, Julie de MacMahon :

We then brought her to a room off the choir accompanied by the Dauphine, who was weeping bitterly. I helped to dress our illustrious novice in her new garb, and she entered the choir with a triumphant air, clothed in her beloved serge. Imagine the effect on the spectators. Those who had not wept till now, could not restrain their tears at the extraordinary change. She had only been given the robe and the white veil. At the grating she received the copper girdle, the scapular, the white cloak, and the large white veil which fell over half her face. The Dauphine almost sobbed out loud during all this. She kept her handkerchief pressed to her face. When thus dressed the Princess prostrated with arms outstretched in the form of a cross, on a frieze carpet with a border of flowers, and remained there during the recital of some prayers by the celebrant. Reverend Mother then sprinkled her with holy water, and she rose and came to embrace us all.

Another witness, M. de la Motte, the Bishop of Amiens, wrote :

On the day of the reception she was the only person with dry eyes. Even the Guards wept when they saw her in her serge habit.

The King that day had sent dinner for the Carmelites from Versailles. Mademoiselle de Mac-Mahon gaily discourses of the menu, which was as usual without meat :

You would like to know how we fared that day. There was plenty of fish, pastry, sweetmeats, and excellent wine. This has lasted us for nearly a week's feasting. The greater part was sent to the infirmary, but haven't our pious appetites been pampered !

Twelve months later Madame Louise completed her sacrifice by her profession. Again the Pope congratulated the King and the novice, and regretted that he could not receive her vows in person, but delegated the Nuncio to do so in his name.

The novice writes thus to her Superior :

I can hardly tell you how impatient I am for the happy moment which will consecrate me for ever to the service of the Lord. My happiness and my ardent longing for the 12th proves to me more and more that I am where God wishes me to be.

At last, on the 12th September, in the Chapter room, in presence of all the religious, she pronounced and signed her eternal vows in these words :

I, Sister Louise Marie Theresa of St. Augustine, make my profession and promise obedience, poverty, and chastity to God, our Lord, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Reverend Father Superiors, according to the primitive rule of the Order called of Mount Carmel, which is without mitigation, and all this till death.

The betrothal crown was then placed upon her head. It had been made by the Carmelites of the Rue de Grenelle, and was afterwards kept by them as a relic.

The real profession takes place in the Chapter

room, because once, in the days of St. Theresa, a novice who was pronouncing her vows publicly in the church, fell into an ecstasy and could not proceed.

On the 1st October the ceremony received its public confirmation. A discourse was delivered by the Bishop of Senlis, and the blessing given by the Papal Nuncio.

Madame Louise having now put her hand to the plough, never once looked back.

A contemporary, Madame Victorine de Chastenay, writes in her recently published *Mémoires* :

Madame Louise had for ever given up greatness and found rest. She persevered in her sentiments to the day of her death, without a trouble or a regret.

Madame de Genlis on the same subject expresses herself thus :

What an abdication for the daughter of the King of France to leave Versailles and live in a cell! I cannot understand how a person of thirty-five, brought up in the midst of luxury and pomp, could endure the life of these austere recluses.

As we follow Madame Louise into her cloister we can hardly help thinking of another Carmelite, who at this time had been in her grave for sixty long years. She was no stainless soul, like our Royal Princess, but repentant and absolved, like Magdalen in the Gospel, she took refuge under the mantle of St. Theresa. We speak of Sister Louise de la Miséricorde, Duchesse de la Vallière. It is not to offend the memory of the spotless Carmelite that we thus link her name with that of the penitent, but because the same song of joy and gratitude arose from each when she found herself safe in Carmel. Before Madame Louise, Louise de la Vallière said : “ At last I leave the world, without regret ; I am full of joy.”

She spoke these words to Bossuet, who himself told Marshal de Bellefonds of his penitent's happiness. "All the Court is edified and astonished by her tranquillity and joy."

The favourite of Louis XIV. did penance for thirty-six years with hair shirt and discipline, and now one of the blood of Louis XV. gives herself to the King of kings, who visits His blessings as He does His punishments even to the fourth generation.

CHAPTER II

PRIVATE PAPERS

BEFORE we enter the cloister with Madame Louise, let us see how she had prepared for her new life during those long years of waiting. It is not difficult to arrive at this knowledge by consulting the several historians of the Princess, but it is better to go straight to the source, and for the thoughts of Madame Louise, consult Madame Louise herself.

When at Versailles, the Princess often wrote her impressions of the day, and especially of her communion days, on loose sheets of paper. These she brought with her to Carmel, where their existence was for a long time unknown. It is not easy to read the writing, there is no punctuation, and, after the fashion of the day, spelling is treated very cavalierly, and in these papers, written by a King's daughter, there are many mistakes which no child would make in our day. One must not conclude from this that the Princess was a dunce. Madame Campan says that at twelve years of age Madame Louise had not yet learnt all her alphabet; but this lady did not know her as a child and can hardly be taken as an authority. The Princess's Benedictine

governess, Madame de Soulanges, was too clever and capable a woman to have tolerated idleness or carelessness.

We have, it is true, no direct knowledge of the education given at Fontevrault, but we may suppose it to be similar to that in the Benedictine Abbey of Montvilliers, where the Marquise de Créquy was brought up, and of which she writes :

They instructed me well in my religion, and I also carefully studied sacred and profane history, the usual geography, theology, and mythology, French and other genealogies, the Italian language, and the best literature of our time.

Even outside convents girls learnt all these subjects. The Countess de Chastenay-Lanty, who was educated at home, mentions in her *Mémoires* these class-books—Plutarch, Virgil, Horace, La Fontaine, Télémaque, Racine, Rollin, Vertôt, the Catechism, Restaud's and Wailly's grammars, a mythological dictionary, geometry, and elementary mathematics. From this extensive curriculum, spelling alone seems to be omitted.

Without embracing such a number of subjects, Madame Louise had doubtless followed the usual programme. All that we know for certain is, that after her return from Fontevrault, she had special lessons for an hour every day, from Monsieur Henrion, of the French Academy, the Royal Librarian. She also learnt music from Beaumarchais, and for five hours every day, while she occupied herself with sewing and embroidery, one of her maids of honour read aloud to her.

"Italian, English, the higher mathematics, Horology," says Madame Campan, "in turn occupied the leisure of these Princesses."

Still, spelling seems certainly to have been neglected.

But the matter and style of these papers makes up for all other deficiencies. There is firmness and brightness in their language, and depth in their thought, while they are quite free from the false sentimentality and straining after effect so noticeable in the writings of the age. They breathe a simple, practical faith. Madame Louise never intended her reflections and prayers to be published, but they were collected after her death in 1789, and given to the world in a volume dedicated to her only surviving sister, Madame Adelaide.

Intended for no eye but her own, they are of the more interest to us, revealing as they do the inmost thoughts of this Princess as she took her place amid the splendours of the Court, hiding from all, the true wishes of her heart. Strange, indeed, to think that these reflections were written only a few steps from the rooms of Madame de Pompadour, and in a Court whose wickedness has been almost unparalleled. The Court of Versailles, indeed, was composed of two very different groups—the King, his favourites, and those who pandered to his pleasures on one hand, while on the other stood the gentle, holy Queen, surrounded by her children.

Madame Louise, as well as her brother and sisters, took her part in the usual pompous round of Court ceremonies. At the play, the banquet, the chase, and all the daily amusements, she attended in the costume demanded by each, nor did she spoil the pleasure of those around her by displaying any untimely austerity. In the evening she took part in the Cavagnole, a solemn game, the interesting nature of

which we may gather from a verse of Voltaire's on the subject :

On croirait que le jeu console,
Mais l'ennui vient à pas comptés
S'asseoir entre des Majestés
A la table d'un Cavagnole.

This may be roughly rendered into English :

It is believed that games console.
But dulness comes with heavy feet
And takes with Royalties his seat
At the table of the Cavagnole.

Madame Louise herself tells us her motives for mingling in this round of gaiety :

"I went to the game for the sake of being agreeable," she wrote; "then came tableaux, and still I had to stay for the same reason, but sometimes I fell asleep from sheer weariness. But I was at Court, and had to do as they do at Courts, so I did it without complaining."

Her true sentiments, disguised under her compliance with the etiquette of life at Versailles, are revealed to us in these private papers, which she kept carefully and read again and again. They were the sole confidant of her resolutions, and she says :

Ah! if I were ever to forget these holy resolutions, this dumb paper would rise up against me, and accuse me of unfaithfulness. If I ever should be unfaithful, at least let me never break the vow I now make to be so no longer than a moment.

Reading the prayers written by the Princess we learn to understand something of her character, and at the same time we marvel at the mercy God showed to France in placing this saintly woman under the very roof where the luxury of the eighteenth century had reached its highest pitch.

First, we have put together all that relates to the Princess's vocation. In different places she writes :

I feel that God calls me to something higher, something which will bind me more directly to His service. He desires, He demands that I should follow more directly His words in the Gospel, "If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." . . .

I sigh for the time when Providence shall have swept away all obstacles, and I can separate myself entirely from the world. . . .

Thou hast accepted my sacrifice, and I must now wait till the time shall have come to fulfil it. I await it, O my God, with submission, yet with longing. Hasten, oh hasten! this happy moment.

Have I not been tried enough? Dost Thou not know my heart's vows after all these faithful years? Canst Thou doubt my resolution? Have I ever wavered? Have I not always turned to the Voice calling me, with all my thoughts, desires, and strength, sighing ever for the happiness of following it, weeping to find, year after year, that I am no nearer my goal? . . .

I have hidden nothing from myself: humiliations, poverty, every kind of mortification and privation, solitude, depression, contradictions, scorn, unkind treatment,—I have put them all in the worst light, and they cannot frighten me. I have compared the two states, that of Princess and of Carmelite, and have decided that that of Carmelite is the higher, and never shall I waver from this decision. . . .

Thou art my witness, O my God, that if it were Thy will my heart would fly, even now, to the holy shelter Thou hast chosen for me. . . .

My days are passing, my years are rolling on. Alas! how many will remain to give to God? . . .

Set free my heart more and more from everything which keeps it from Thee. O God, who commandest the storms and the tempests, calm the troubles of my heart, which drown the sound of Thy voice within me. If necessary, restrain even my hopes and sweep away my regrets. Fill my soul with the peace beyond understanding.

When the time for which she had so much longed,

when she was to ask the Royal permission, at last drew near, she wrote :

I shall want all Thy help to explain to him whose consent is necessary. Make a favourable occasion and prepare his heart to listen to me. May I be strong against his tenderness and strong against my own. Give me courage and persuasive words to vanquish all his objections. Speak to him Thyself for me, and answer me through him.

Until the last day Madame Louise was haunted by a dread that death might overtake her before she had carried out her dear project. In the will she made at Court she begged the King not to embalm her if she died at Versailles, but to have her buried in the religious habit at the Carmelite Convent of the Rue de Grenelle.

During the long eighteen years of waiting she threw herself thoroughly into her present duties, considering them as a preparation for the future duties of the cloister :

While my thoughts are full of my future state, and the virtues I must then exercise, let me not neglect my present state, however short may be the time Providence wills me to remain in it. Show me all my duties, and grant that I may punctually fulfil them, as if I were to be all my life what I am now. Give me many occasions of doing those good works I shall be unable to do in the cloister. . . .

Give me all the virtues of a religious, and help me to practise them as far as possible from this hour. Send me frequent occasions of obedience, mortification, and humiliation. May I despise the world and its vanities, and glorify God without human respect, bravely embracing the Cross of Christ, and confessing aloud His religion and His Church. Let me resign myself to the will of God, praying and conversing with Him, visiting Him at the foot of His altars, participating at His table, and listening to His Word. May I everywhere, even in the places most given up to the world, carry a crucified heart, the heart of a Carmelite.

Let us now see what are the duties Madame

Louise wishes to practise at Court before looking elsewhere for harder ones :

I will guard myself against pride, the poison of high estate ; against indolence and luxury, so natural in one, placed as I am, under no restraint ; against the many desires born of the power attached to my rank ; against the dissipations to which my flighty imagination may lead me ; against a multitude of inclinations from which God has hitherto preserved me. But still I must fear them, since my position both exposes me to them and might make them fatal to me. . . .

My conduct must show to those around me a consistent spirit of order, both in the usual practices of piety and in the duties and good works of my position. I will always be even-tempered and patient under contradiction, ready to give up my own will, affable, lowly in speech and manner. I will be careful to keep secrets confided to me, and to betray no curiosity about those of others. I will take my stand on the side of piety and pious people, and will always be respectful in the performance of my religious duties. I will remember that, according to the warning of the Apostle, I may lose myself even while apparently most faithful to the law. If I were to give preference to works of supererogation to the prejudice of duties, it would be a misplaced fervour, without merit before God and often even reprehensible in the sight of men. I will make each duty, as it comes, my principal obligation. By this rule I shall be paying my debts to God, morning, noon, and night. . . .

So in whatever situation God may place me, I will show, towards my neighbour, dependence, tenderness, respect, kindness, or compassion, as circumstances may dictate.

The special duties of the great were rarely understood at Versailles, and Madame Louise was too clear-sighted not to see this. She exclaims :

Alas ! I groan in the sight of God. I see around me only those whose hearts are indifferent to heavenly gifts, and seek only those of earth.

The general example made no difference to Madame Louise ; as we shall now see she fully under-

stood what God requires from the privileged ones of earth.

God places some people in high positions that they may more easily assist those below them. I can never better fulfil the merciful designs of Providence than by using the prerogatives of the rank in which I have been born to help, succour, and protect all who justly claim my aid. This charitable duty is imposed by my religion. . . .

My birth, which sets me apart from my father's subjects, does not free me from the necessity of applying myself to the service of God and to the interests of my brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, but, on the contrary, by multiplying around me occasions of usefulness, lays a more strict obligation upon me. It would be to misunderstand, to forget God's designs in my regard, and to degrade the privileges of my rank, if I, in my high position, were not to occupy myself with human interests and serve them with all my power and authority. My religion warns me that the abuse of this law will take no unimportant place in the long list of accusations which will condemn crowds of the great.

The Princess makes each event of the Christian life an occasion of pious remembrance. She was baptized on the very day of her birth, the 15th of July 1737, by the grand almoner, Cardinal de la Tour d'Auvergne, Archbishop of Vienna, assisted by M. Jomard, Curé of Notre Dame de Versailles, who entered the event in the parish register. Madame de Tallard, governess of the Royal children, held the little Princess in her arms. The following year, at Fontevrault, when the child was in danger of death, the ceremonies of baptism were supplemented hastily, and with no pomp, by Monsieur d'Aubigeon, Prior of St. John of the Habit. Her head nurse, Marie Bailly-Adnet, and Monsieur de Bussy de Bizay acted as god-mother and god-father respectively.

She writes on the anniversary of her baptism :

What do I not owe, my God, to Your infinite mercy ? The Voice of Your Blood throughout all eternity has spoken in my favour. You

broke the chains which would have held me for ever in the power of Your enemy and mine. You have crowned the goodness, which caused me to be born in the bosom of Your holy religion, by giving me the inestimable privilege of baptism. You have given me the mark of Your chosen people. I have since consciously confirmed the holy vows made for me at the font. I repeat them all at this moment. . . . Live and reign in my heart. Can I love Thee too much? Can I too tenderly love a God who loved me before I was able to know or love Him?

The anniversary of her first communion, made at Fontevault on the 21st November 1748, also awoke tender memories. She speaks thus of it :

Scarcely had my first years gone by, hardly had the first teaching of religion been tested by my soul, than Thou didst cause to be born within me a most tender love for the Sacrament of Thy altars. I longed for the moment when I should receive and possess Thee. New gifts of Thy grace, lively faith and an ardent love, still more increased my desires. Thou didst hear and answer them, O God of goodness. Thou didst crown them by giving me Thy sacred body to be my food. . . . Oh favour, which till the last hour of my life will be present to my remembrance and engraved on my heart in characters of love. It shall daily excite my most fervent gratitude. I shall above all recall it, O my God, when I come into Thy sanctuary, to offer my soul to Thee once more for Thy dwelling-place. Come, Divine Jesus, accept this soul which Thou hast wished to unite so closely to Thyself. May it be all Thine and seek Thee alone. May a generous, ardent, faithful love respond in it to the love which led Thee to honour it in Thy first visit.

Communion, frequent communion, nourished this white lily, blooming in the halls of Versailles. To carry the white cloth before the Princesses when they went to communion on feast days was an honour much coveted by the nobles. Madame Louise, however, generally preferred to receive Holy Communion in private from her confessor's hands. She seems never to have made use of the particular privilege of

Royal persons—"le droit de chapelle"—of which they can take advantage wherever they go. It permits them to have Mass celebrated in their private oratories, or in any other room they may select. It was, then, in the beautiful chapel in the Palace of Versailles that Madame Louise frequently received communion in the early morning hours. On rarer and more solemn occasions she did so in public, with all ceremony, for the sake of example.

Of all the beautiful objects of art in this chapel, none attracted the Princess so much as Santerre's picture of St. Theresa. Voltaire in the appendix to his *Siècle de Louis XIV.* criticises this picture with some justice :

It is an achievement of grace. Its only reproach is that it is too voluptuous for a religious picture.

In another place he says :

I have seen twelve thousand francs refused for a picture of Santerre's.

A profound, humble, grateful faith filled the communicant in these early morning devotions.

"God of love and peace," she wrote, "make my heart worthy to possess Thee in the mystery of Thy love. . . .

May each interval between the festivals of the Church become a perpetual circle of acts of preparation and thanksgiving for the participation in the holy mysteries. . . .

So many treasures on the one hand, such barrenness on the other. So many communions, so little reform ; so many graces, so little correspondence with the signal favours with which You deign to overwhelm the poorest of Your servants. . . .

I will offer my communion to make reparation for the many times I have received His sacred body unfruitfully. I will promise to reanimate my faith, my desires, my confidence, my love, and my gratitude. I will abjure at His feet all my past miseries."

And after communion :

I possess Thee, O God of my soul ! Permit me, O my sweet Jesus, to give free rein at this moment to my feelings of gratitude. Thou hast just chosen my soul for Thy sanctuary. Deign to banish from it all the trouble and confusion that self-love and a worldly spirit could sow there. Reign within me with all the virtues which will keep me in Thy grace. Thou dost unite in Thyself all the blessings of salvation. I possess them in possessing Thee. May sin henceforth flee the heart where Thou hast just established Thy dwelling. May good works publish Thy generosity and my gratitude.

Accept, O my God, this heart which burns to belong to Thee. Thou hast so many rights to its possession. Reign Thou alone and for ever over my soul with all its faculties, over my will, my affections, my body and all my senses.

May my memory be wholly occupied with thoughts of Thy benefits to me. May my mind find its dearest occupation in meditation on Thy lovable qualities. May my heart be filled with those ineffable ardours with which Thou dost burn for me.

Madame Louise went frequently to confession before her communions. At Versailles her first confessor was a Jesuit, Père de Beauvais. When, to her great sorrow, persecution banished the Jesuits from Court, she chose Monsieur de Ternay for a confessor. He merited all her confidence, and followed her later to St. Denis. After his death she addressed herself to M. Consolin, Canon Opportune of Paris, but returned, as soon as it was possible, to the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

The confession of her sins was accompanied by a deep sorrow, which found vent in these words :

No, my God, Thou wilt never reject a contrite and humble heart. This sentiment should reign continually in our hearts, and spread its sweetness over those whose burdens are more painful, more bitter, more heart-rending. He is merciful to sinners. Our contradictory feelings, our alternate fervour and laxity, should not alarm us. They are the combats God permits that we may be

victors and merit heaven. Let us go to Him with our whole hearts. May our past falls give us fresh ardour and confidence in Him, and new strength against ourselves. It is He who has relieved us, and He who will sustain us. Let us only think of retrieving the time we have lost.

We see from the writings of the Princess how the devotion to the Sacred Heart, so fervent and widespread in our days, had, in her time, already made itself felt. She wrote :

It is from the adorable Heart of Jesus that we imbibe all grace. We have pierced this Divine Heart, but we should look on it with confidence as well as sorrow. Through the wound our cruel hands have made, let us penetrate to its inmost recesses. Ah ! it is not with anger or vengeance that Heart throbs, but with tenderness for us, with compassion for our weakness, with desire for our salvation, with kindness, indulgence, and mercy.

It would be strange indeed if a Royal daughter of France could forget in her prayers the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom her grandfather had solemnly and for ever dedicated his kingdom.

"O my tender Mother," she writes, "may I partake of your Divine Son's gifts and blessings, in common with all the subjects of a kingdom specially confided to you, and with its Monarch whose interests are so dear to me, with a family whose glory it is to belong to you, with all the faithful who profess and defend devotion to you. . . .

Be always, O Holy Virgin, my protectress, and my model in the use of my high estate, my support and refuge in danger, my hope and sustainer in my work for Heaven."

Before Louis XIII. had declared Our Lady patron of his kingdom, St. Michael was the official protector of France. The arguments with which Madame Louise tries to persuade the Archangel not to withdraw his patronage from France are ingenious :

"You have long been the special patron of the kingdom," she says; "it has now only been placed under the protection of your Queen that you may increase, by your intercession with her, our resources and defences."

Amongst the saints most warmly invoked by the Princess was naturally St. Theresa, the mother of the Carmelites, whom she already counted as her mother also.

She had particular devotion to St. Francis Xavier, and St. Louis, the protector of the Royal family and her especial patron.

"Great King," she says to St. Louis, "great man, great saint, destined by Providence to occupy a position sown with so many pitfalls, may I learn from your example to overcome all those dangers that menace me. May I ceaselessly oppose to them, as you did, the arms of prayer, watchfulness, faith, and the Holy Sacraments. I claim your special protection with confidence, not only because the same blood flows in our veins, but because the Church has attached me to you by particular bonds. Surely the offshoots may expect shelter from the parent-stem towering above them."

The consideration of death evoked most Christian thoughts. The Princess writes :

Honours, distinctions, birth, rank, power, all will escape me at that last moment. Jesus, crucified, alone will remain, and in His sacred wounds I shall find all my riches. I shall confidently gaze on them, and kiss them a thousand times. I will hide myself in them, and there defend myself against God's justice, and in them I will read all I have to hope for from His mercy. . . .

Faith teaches me that separations are not eternal, that a day will come when I shall be reunited to all those for whom I weep to-day, by bonds which shall last throughout eternity.

I cut short these extracts. I should not like the Princess's pious musings to appear too long to those whose object in reading this book is not merely devotional. But we could not form a clear idea of

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Madame Louise if we did not at least glance at these private notes written at Versailles, breathing as they do the perfume of a tender piety, and revealing a just, sensible, orderly mind, as well as an earnest and well-thought-out preparation for the act which we have recounted in our first pages.



Neudeck, Phot.

VIEW IN THE PARK OF VERSAILLES.

CHAPTER III

HER VOCATION

IN the *grand siècle* the whole world bowed down with respect before a girl who took the Carmelite veil. Of one such Mdme. de Sévigné writes with emotion :

This kind of vocation is a prodigy of grace ; I am touched at such high virtue. I look upon her as a vessel of election, as a chosen and distinguished creature, as a soul filled with the grace of Jesus Christ. Her separation from the world seems to me a favour so great that I consider her with admiration and look upon her state with envy.

But quite a different view was taken by the great minds in Voltaire's century, which he himself so elegantly baptized "*La Chiasse de l'Humanité*"—"The Scum of Humanity."

The Maréchal de Luxembourg, Monsieur Helvétius, the Princesse de Rohan, and many others, became the mouthpieces of the sneering world, and smiled in disdainful amusement at Madame Louise's sacrifice. In particular one old sinner, Madame du Deffand, who went to Nanterre in disguise, to drink the waters of St. Geneviève's well, hoping for a cure of her sore eyes, but who afterwards died impenitent, wrote very bitterly of Madame Louise :

This adventure has not made much of a sensation. People shrug their shoulders, speak of a weak mind, and go on talking of something else.

The friend of the philosophers was mistaken. The Court and town spoke of the "adventure" a great deal. It was certainly not the first time that a Royal lady of France had entered religion. Queen Radegonde, Queen Bathilde, Bertrude, granddaughter of Charlemagne, Isabella, sister of St. Louis, Jeanne, daughter of Louis XI., Anne, sister of Louis XII., had all sought God in the cloister; but no Princess had ever before entered the Order of Reformed Carmelites, which was still little known in France.

The rationalists reasoned illogically about the act. It was the fashion to protest indignantly against monastic vows, which twenty years later were abolished by law in the name of Liberty. They tried, more or less in earnest, to find the true reason for a choice which did not appear to be forced on her.

Soulavie, a not very reliable historian, declared that Madame Louise fled, in a panic of terror, to the cloister because so many were dying at Court.

Sentimental people attributed what they considered a quasi-suicide to the bitterness of disillusionment. According to them, Madame Louise found her vocation in her hump. She sought God because men would not seek her. Others, the virtuous, thought that they saw in her withdrawal from the world the pious expiation for hidden sins, and worked zealously to discover what the sins could have been. Others, again, said that Madame Louise's actions were governed by Cæsar's maxim: "Better first in a village than second in Rome." As she was the youngest of her sisters she was only "Madame

Dernière" at Court, and these good people thought that she preferred to hold the place of honour among twenty poor women.

These foolish stories were not believed and invented solely by the ignorant. In the archives of Foreign Affairs, a despatch is to be found from Paris to the Comte de Flavigny. It is dated 3rd December 1773, and contains this falsehood :

Madame Louise could never have been made prioress of the house if she had stayed at Versailles. So they say she has become a Carmelite to obtain this honour.

Madame Campan sees a different kind of pride in the Princess's sacrifice, an ambition higher than that of domination, the desire to do something great and noble.

She had an exalted soul, she loved everything great, she often interrupted my reading to cry, "There, that is something great, something noble." She saw but one glorious action possible for her—to renounce a palace for a cell, splendid apparel for a serge robe, and she did it.

These more or less calumnious inventions are not worth discussing. No reader of the previous pages could doubt whence came the inspiration which led Madame Louise to Carmel. She heard of these uncharitable rumours, and her reflections on the subject show a true Christian heart.

So many good souls, who do not know me, exaggerate my virtue, that it would be wrong of me to be angry with those who, knowing me no better, exaggerate the evil in me.

The truth is, that the Princess entered a convent the better to ensure her eternal salvation. Let her tell us so in her own words :

I am going to tell you what has led me to leave the world, attractive as it might have been for me, and though by my rank I am preserved from many dangers which beset others. My reasons were—my sins, and all that Jesus Christ has undergone to save us; the necessity of penance, either in this life or the next—and penance is harder in a comfortable life, especially to one loving comfort as I do; the remembrance of the parable of the camel who could more easily pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man can enter heaven; the precept of alms, which should consist of all one's superfluity—and this, for me, is immense; and, finally, to possess God eternally and to enjoy the crown prepared for us in heaven.

Certainly nothing authorises us to think that Madame Louise took the severe view of a contemporary theologian, St. Alphonsus Liguori, who surely generalised too much when he spoke of the salvation of ladies living in the society of the eighteenth century as an exceptional occurrence: "At present ladies living in the world and saving their souls are rare." This judgment, though too severe even for Naples, where it was passed, makes us appreciate better the great examples of virtue given to the world even in that depraved time. Madame Louise had not far to seek for a model of a Christian life. Before her eyes, her mother, the Queen, had lived on the very threshold of wickedness and remained pure as an angel. Her soul leaped over the fiery furnace of evil in the Court, and dwelt ever in the pure atmosphere of heaven. It is then clear that all conditions and classes, in all times, may be saved, but it is no less true that those are more favoured who are called to retirement and sacrifice. The love of God, added to her desire of salvation, decided Madame Louise's vocation. Later, she thus taught an aspirant what her motives should be.

The fear you have of your salvation is a very strong motive, but it should not be the only one; the love of God, the desire of possess-

ing Him, and of doing for our Lord what He has done for you, ought to accompany it.

But besides these motives, which every one entering a convent should have, surely Madame Louise had in her sacrifice some other special and separate object. Yes, there was another motive, and the Carmelite often and frankly avowed it, so that it cannot be mistaken. She offered herself as a holocaust to God for the eternal salvation of her father, Louis XV.

Madame Louise had a tender affection for her mother, and the Queen loved her perhaps even more than her other daughters. Marie Leczinska wrote: "I not only love Louise, I respect her." And Louise wrote of her mother:

I ought to do my best to express the deep and lively affection I owe to the noble mother Heaven has given me to be my model. . . . I should have wished to be oftener and longer with her, but there are customs to which even the feelings of nature must give place. . . . O my God, preserve the Queen, give her the consolation before her death of seeing me one of her much-loved Carmelites.

When her mother died, Madame Louise asked the Abbé Proyart to write her Life, and urged him to the work: "I am most impatient to see the Life of the late Queen in print." When it was finished she wrote her appreciation to the author:

I send you, sir, the dedicatory letter. The Life of the Queen is perfect and has touched me to the bottom of my heart.

When she became a Carmelite, her mother's memory was still so dear to her that she preserved a lock of her hair. It was her only treasure, but one

day she sacrificed even this, showing an example of perfect renunciation. One of her novices had brought a similar relic with her to Carmel. The Princess said to her: "I thank you for making me see that to preserve our mother's hair shows that we are still too much attached to human things. We should find everything in God. Let us both give up this little satisfaction."

The novice was quite ready to make this last sacrifice, but she thought that anything which had belonged to the holy Queen should be kept by her daughter as a real relic. Madame Louise would not, however, take advantage of this way of escape, but reproaching herself for her self-love, she destroyed the little that remained to her of the mother she had so much loved and admired.

She dwelt on her mother's memory with deep tenderness but no sorrow. She felt that one whose earthly pilgrimage was one long trial of her wifely tenderness, her Christian purity, her queenly dignity, was certain of an eternal reward. She knew how near the Queen had been to God, how ripe for heaven in most heroic and holiest resignation. Of her she wrote :

I have often wondered how the Queen, while perfectly faithful to the duties of her great state, could free herself from her surroundings, and live like a saint in the midst of the Court. . . .

What I have seen of the Queen's virtues is little compared to what I have learnt of them, and I have heard even more since her death than while she lived.

The thought of the King's spiritual state, on the other hand, filled his daughter with the greatest alarm. She hid it by her filial and loyal respect, but it was increased by her uneasy love and shocked faith. It

would, indeed, have been difficult to preserve any illusions respecting the virtue of Louis XV. His daughter had seen him absent himself from the Pascal Communion, that such an act might not be contrasted with his open wickedness. She had dried the bitter tears shed in silence by her humbled mother. She had seen the Marquise de Pompadour presented to the Queen, and she and her sisters had been obliged to admit the King's official mistress into their own carriage. Argenson relates the incident thus :

Madame de Pompadour was in the carriage with the Princesses. They had decided to say nothing to her, no matter what she said. She became very angry and blushed very red.

The Princesses had the supreme humiliation of seeing Madame du Barry also officially presented to the Royal family. This was "a most dissipated woman," says Bachaumont. On the 22nd of April 1779 the King's daughters were obliged to welcome and even to embrace their father's favourite. The *Court Gazette* published these impudent remarks on the occurrence :

The Comtesse du Barry was very well received by the Princesses, and even with particular favours. The following Sunday she dined with them, and all the spectators admired her noble mien and the grace of her attitudes.

Thus, for many reasons, Madame Louise must have thought her father very guilty, or, at the best, very weak. Her opinion we may gather from something she once wrote to the Cardinal de Bernis about her young natural brother, the Abbé de Bourbon : "He is actuated by the blood which flows in his veins. It is very weak."

But in spite of his wickedness the King was still loved by his daughter. We know, indeed, that even

his unbridled licence had not smothered his family affection. His children loved him, not only because it was their duty, but because they knew he loved them. It has been said that before his favourites he sometimes ridiculed his daughters' devotion. Be that as it may, he appreciated their virtues and thoroughly enjoyed their company. Contemporary writers, often hostile to the Princesses, still dwell on the affectionate and simple relations of the father with his children. Dangerville writes, in his *Private Life of Louis XV.* :

The King loved them [his children] with that bourgeois good-nature, so rare in Princes.

Argenson, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was a great friend of Voltaire's, also declared in his *Mémoires* :

The King seems to wish to find all his society in his family like a simple patriarch. . . . The King likes a chat with his children, and is guided by them in deciding a good many things.

It is quite true that the King sometimes allowed himself to be influenced by his daughters rather than by the evil counsellors who too often directed his actions. Yet the affectionate intercession of Madame Louise and her sisters could not save the Jesuits. These men were honoured by the abuse of Voltaire, and by the hate of Choiseul and the Pompadour, who speaks of "those serpents called Jesuits." Louis, in spite of his own repugnance, and of the tears and entreaties of his daughters, sacrificed the Jesuits to the impious hatred of the philosophers, the malice of the Jansenist Parliament, and the professional jealousy of the University. He banished them from his

kingdom and pursued to the very end the extinction of their Order.

Madame Louise was one of the warmest in showing her sympathy with the persecuted Order. One of them writing to the Father General told how the Princess received the expression of their gratitude :

I hastened to give your message to Madame Louise. It is hard to describe the sincere respect, lively joy, and tender gratitude with which she received your written acknowledgment of her love and devotion for the Society. She wished me to point out the passages in your letter which relate to her. She then begged me to translate them into French. I did so, and she read them again and again, saying she would put them among her private papers and keep them as precious treasures. She told me, Revd. Father, to tell you all this and to ask you and the Society to pray for her, the King, and all the Royal family. Finally, she promised always to support us and to feel for us the same affection and kindness.

Until the last the Jesuits thundered against materialism and unbelief, tearing from d'Alembert this tribute : " In truth these men die hard."

But it was not only their ardent campaign against philosophism which condemned them. We are told by Cardinal Bernis, who took part in their trial, what was their unforgivable crime :

The Jesuits refused to countenance Mdme. de Pompadour, and insisted that to repair the scandal she had given, the Marquise should leave the Court.

In her *Mémoires* Madame de Hausset, an intimate friend of Mdme. de Pompadour, confirms this :

Père Sacy refused to be Mdme. de Pompadour's confessor unless she left Court.

The favourite's vengeance was implacable. The Jesuits disappeared.

When the Christian King signed the order to banish the Jesuits he little thought that their praises would be sounded before the very tribunal which condemned his successor. Montesquieu pleaded their cause before the Revolutionary Assembly: "You will not," said he, "refuse justice to this celebrated congregation, whose faults are problematical, but whose virtues are certain. These men have been the first teachers of the greater number of all here, and after thirty years of courage in misfortune they deserve this meagre reward." And Grégoire, surely little to be suspected of leaning towards the religious Orders, added on the same occasion: "It is well known that the country has suffered through the suppression of the Jesuits. They understand education better than free citizens or secular priests. So in science we have seen what they have done, and may infer what they will do."

It is noticeable that the same Parliament of Paris which passed the decree against the Jesuits, forbade the publication of the Papal Bull which announced the canonisation of St. Vincent de Paul, declared vaccination unlawful under pain of imprisonment, fine, and banishment, and proscribed lay congregations of the Blessed Virgin. In the latter, these strong-minded counsellors pretended to see danger to the public peace and the security of the State. Yet the Jesuits, St. Vincent de Paul, the white banners of Our Lady, and even vaccination, have survived the long-dead Parliament.

The Princess's efforts, powerless to save the Jesuits, were ineffectual also in another direction, as Barbier recounts in his Journal:

It is said that the Princesses have gone to the King and begged him not to forsake the Archbishop of Paris, and to uphold religion.

Their prayers were unavailing. They could not save M. de Beaumont—a man staunch to his duties, who had become obnoxious to the Jansenists and free-thinkers. But one victory the Princesses had, and it was no mean one: they prevailed upon the King to proscribe in his dominions the *Encyclopédie*.

This book, compiled by Diderôt, Condorcet, d'Alembert, Rousseau, Condillac, and the philosophers, was like a great Tower of Babel erected against God. It had now, to Voltaire's great joy, reached its seventh formidable story, its seventh folio volume, and was everywhere circulated. On the one hand, Madame Louise and her sisters implored the King to suppress it, while on the other, Mdme. de Pompadour ranged herself as its most powerful advocate. There is a portrait of this woman in the Louvre in which a volume of the *Encyclopédie* is conspicuously displayed on a bracket beside her. The title of the book is quite discernible.

But in spite of this powerful protection the text was too clearly self-incriminating to escape punishment. A few short extracts will suffice to convince the most partial judge:

The immortality of the soul is only a barbarous dogma.

The fear of God is the beginning of folly.

Virtue is a habit of useful acts.

Elsewhere Condorcet traced the programme of the enterprise thus:

We wish to compose a work in which religion, while apparently respected, should either be betrayed by the weakness of its proofs or staggered by the juxtaposition of philosophic principles which should undermine its foundations.

La Harpe, a professional critic, pronounced his judgment in these words:

Scepticism, materialism, atheism, here show themselves without modesty or discretion. Hypocritical philosophy, throwing away the garments of virtue and moderation, shows itself naked. It pours forth all the poison of the most barefaced calumny.

La Harpe, it will be said, was a partial critic on this point—and perhaps he was—but we must defer at least to this opinion of the Marquise du Deffand, who was ever lenient with her brother philosophers :

1st November 1760.

Some articles I have been reading bore me to death. I should not make men legislators who have only wit, but neither taste nor talent ; who, though quite honest men, write most evil-sounding things about morals, whose reasons are all sophisms or paradoxes.

It is a strange circumstance that the very editors of the *Encyclopédie* judge it as severely. Voltaire delivers himself thus :

It is an edifice built half of marble and half of mud . . . the work is infected and made vile by a thousand ridiculous articles and schoolboy declamations . . . puerile and commonplace, without principle, definition, or instruction ; it will never be anything but a great rhapsody, wherein is much dirt, side by side with pure gold.

D'Alembert's opinion was much the same :

It is a harlequin's dress where there are a few bits of good stuff and too many rags.

And according to Diderôt :

It is like a refuse heap where a lot of things are thrown together, half-seen, ill-sorted, good, bad, and indifferent. The thoughts are sometimes true, sometimes false or uncertain, but always incoherent and extravagant.

It was, then, the triumph of right when the Prin-

cesses awoke the slumbering conscience of the King and gained their suit. According to their wish the book was laid before Parliament and suppressed by two successive decrees of the King's Council (1752-1759), "as enclosing maxims tending to destroy the King's authority, to establish a spirit of independence and revolt, and in hidden and equivocal words to corrupt morals, and to raise the foundations of error, irreligion, and unbelief."

It was probably the entreaties of Madame Henriette which prevailed most at this time, for this Princess was dying, and made the proscription of the *Encyclopédie* her last request.

Proscribed in France the *Encyclopédie* found a hospitable refuge in Holland, and also in Naples, as we may gather from the writings of the Bishop of Naples at that time, St. Alphonsus Liguori. He makes this indignant complaint :

A French librarian named —— is constantly getting books from France and selling them to every one without limitation. From the capital the plague of these books will infect every one in the kingdom. Lastly, as I hear, this librarian has held a ballot of these pestilential books. So many poor young people nowadays are influenced by these bad books, which are constantly coming from France and being introduced here by men of the party. Books attacking truths of faith and Holy Church are sought after and bought.

Voltaire also, having written some wicked and insulting verses, owed his exile to the Princesses. This fact we know through a very well-informed person, the friend of Madame de Pompadour, who writes :

The Princesses could still count on credit with their father. When the King came to receive their embraces they surrounded

him, redoubling their caresses, and taking advantage of these intimate relations to make him feel the necessity of sending away an author who had just added to his previous well-known evil writings. Voltaire's exile was signed before Mdme. de Pompadour could know of it.

The affection which thus occasionally showed itself in public, flowed on unrestricted in private. Madame Campan tells us the private nicknames the King had for his daughters. He called Adelaide, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise respectively, Coche, Loque, Graille, and Chiffe. This shows that the King's fault, if any, was rather an undignified affection and simple enjoyment than a disdainful indifference in the presence of his daughters. Certain it is that every day, and twice a day, Louis XV. saw his daughters, and enjoyed himself in their society. In the morning before his Council, and in the evening before his supper, when he returned from hunting, the family circle was formed, and rigorously excluded all who did not belong to it. This family life caused much jealousy among some at Court. An incident told by Argenson well illustrates this. One day Madame Louise was with the King for a long time, and when she came out, the Duchesse de Duras complained to her of having been kept waiting, saying sarcastically: "Madame is no doubt provided with a budget."

Later on, when visiting at St. Denis, the King jokingly expressed the same idea. "They will think," said he, returning to his suite after a long chat with his daughter, "that we have been treating of State matters." There is no doubt that her father was much attached to Madame Louise.

"When the Princess came back from Fontevault," says Barbier's

Journal, "the King embraced her for a quarter of an hour, weeping all the time, just like a worthy Paris citizen."

When he could not stop long with her, he would say: "You can have but a moment with me this evening, little heart, for it is late."

After she became a Carmelite the proofs of her father's affection grew more numerous.

Here is his first letter to her at St. Denis :

MY DEAREST DAUGHTER—The Abbé Bertin gave me your letter this morning, and after Mass I had a long talk with him. Although I am your Superior, I have obeyed you in several matters; you must now obey the Superior of your chosen retreat. The Abbé Bertin speaks well of her and of all the other nuns. They will have to lead you carefully at first, that you may reach the goal which is your object in leaving us. Be sure of my affection, dear Louise, or Sister Theresa of St. Augustine. My health is good, though last night I was rather upset, and my morning visit to your sisters was not so pleasant as usual.

Soon he came to see her, and his visits were repeated at least once a month.

"The first time," writes Mdle. de MacMahon, "the King arrived in great sorrow. One could see how much the interview cost him. But when, having spent three-quarters of an hour with her, he found his daughter quite happy, his mood changed, and he walked about the house with a satisfied air which pleased us all greatly."

Louis XV. pretended to think that he would not be allowed to make use of his privilege of entering the enclosure during Lent, and wrote affectionately, "I shall break down the door."

Sometimes the King came in state, but more often his visits were private. A room was set aside for him in the enclosure, but he usually preferred to go straight to his daughter's cell, where, sitting on

the pallet-bed, he would chat with her for a long time, and then take his departure with no more ceremony.

"It is not," he said, "a king who visits one of his monasteries, but a father who comes to see his child."

It once happened, when he was with her, that he made the coffee himself. He gaily tried to induce her to join him, but she would not. If he chanced, as he sometimes did, to arrive while the nuns were saying the office in choir, he would seat himself quietly in a stall near his daughter. Sometimes, under pretext of bringing his own lunch, he would arrive with a gigantic fish, and giving it to his daughter, say, laughing: "I bring him to you myself. I did not wish to confide him to any one else, fearing he would not arrive."

The Royal visits caused the nuns no annoyance. Mdle. de MacMahon wrote of them :

You would like to know how we are affected by all our visitors. We are really pleased when we see the King, especially when he comes alone. He is kind to the community, and when in the house stays alone with his daughter, so that none of us are embarrassed or distracted. The Princesses come more often, and their visits also give us pleasure, but most of the nuns do not even know when they are in the house. Each of us remains in her cell and continues her ordinary duties.

Louis XV. even thought of bringing his dear daughter nearer to him—at least a rumour to this effect is mentioned in the secret correspondence of Mercy-Argenteau with his imperial mistress, Maria Theresa of Austria, though we can find no trace of it elsewhere.

The question of transferring the Carmelites of St. Denis to Versailles has been broached. This project presents many diffi-

culties, and would not have been considered, but that the King's health suggests a near return to a more ordered and Christian life.

Madame Louise would have consented to this scheme only on one condition, the dismissal of Madame du Barry. Thus the idea was abandoned.

The Princess returned her father's affection with a passionate attachment. When she was a very little girl, and the King went away to the war, she cried out: "Does King Pappa wish us never to sleep again?" As she grew older, her love grew with her. The King's charm, gracious manners, and his fondness for his children, drew her still more strongly towards him. Some of the expressions we find in her writing seem exaggerated till we remember that this is a daughter writing of a beloved father. Indeed, at times, her love reaches enthusiasm. "My life should be one of submission and love to my father, who is also my King."

During Madame Louise's Carmelite life the following colloquy was overheard between her and her father :

"Well, dear child, so you really wish to give up all your rights and titles?"

"Oh, no ! dear papa, I shall always keep my most precious right, that of being your daughter."

"Yes, that, dear heart, is written in letters which can never be effaced."

Later on, the nun wrote to Pope Clement XIV.:

I well know all the respect, love, and gratitude I owe the King, my iord and father. The unceasing display of his affection is very dear to me. My prayers for his preservation will last all my life.

It was this filial love which led the Princess to offer herself, in imitation of the Divine Victim, for her

father's salvation and to satisfy the justice of God, outraged by his sins. Here was the motive which led her to embrace the religious life.

When Marie Leczinska was dying, she gave these last instructions to her weeping daughters: "Love the King, your father. I am going from him. I leave him to you. Love him as I have loved him, even more in sorrow than in joy."

Madame Louise never forgot her mother's words, and loved with all her power her father's poor soul, so neglected by himself. We give no fantastic interpretation of the Princess's motives. We have clear evidence of it in her papers. She wrote :

One of the most frequent intentions of my good works and prayers is to draw down God's grace to sinners.

Later, more explicitly :

Me, a Carmelite ; the King, all God's. God can do it and God will do it.

Oh to die a Carmelite and leave all my family on the road to heaven.

When the King shall learn of my resolution, will he consent to it, and can he see it carried out without being drawn towards God and turning altogether to Him ?

And in these eloquent words written at Court we plainly see the association between her father's sins and her sacrifice :

How great is the loving care of my God, for souls gone astray in the paths of perdition nothing can weary or repulse it. Neither delay nor unkindness, nor even the most cruel outrages. He spares these souls, waits for them, and surrounds them with opportunities of repentance. Most precious to God are the souls of sinners. Can I then intercede too much for those towards whom He is already so favourably disposed ?

The eternal mansions resound with a song of gladness when a

sinner repents. Can I better satisfy the desires of my God and Saviour than by my constant zeal and fervour, forcing Him, as it were, to the happy necessity of applying His merits to those poor souls who have strayed from His paths ?

And surely we may conclude that the following fervent prayer is for her father :

Adorable Saviour, may my sorrow merit for the souls Thou hast bought with Thy precious blood, sincerity and promptitude in repentance. May I succeed in turning the darts of Thy anger from striking them. May Thy mercy silence the voice of Thy justice.

Again, we see that the entrance of Madame Louise into Carmel took place within a year after the scandalous presentation of Mdme. du Barry at Court. It was an act which filled the measure of the King's wickedness.

On the eventful 11th April 1770, when she accomplished her sacrifice, the Princess, kneeling in their midst in the Chapter room, revealed to her new companions what was in her mind : "I pray you do me the favour to receive me amongst you, and I beg you to pray to God for the King and for me." Surely those words were a brief definition of her intention.

On the day of her profession, her first care was to write to her father.

I am writing to you, dear papa, with the very pen with which I have just written my vows, so that you may have a share in my happiness, and I assure you I never forget that I owe it all to your kindness to me.

When the sacrifice has been accomplished, and is daily renewed behind the silent grating, the motive is still clear. The King, visiting his daughter, said to her : "I do not know how you can be so happy in a life so hard." She answered naïvely : "Nevertheless,

papa, it is true that I could not be happier. My life is certainly austere, but the thought that I am here for the salvation of those I love consoles me."

We know that even before Madame Louise became one of them, the Carmelites of St. Denis prayed for the King. Mademoiselle de MacMahon, ill-informed of the state of affairs at Court, wrote in 1768 :

It fills us all with satisfaction to know that he [Louis] thinks seriously of his salvation. They say he has had five or six long conferences with his confessor. What happiness it will be, dear god-mother, if our fervent and constant prayers are heard.

But after the advent of Madame Louise these prayers redoubled in intensity. She wrote to her Superior, the Abbé Bertin :

I assure you no prayers or good works are performed here in which the King has not a share.

When her young novices asked permission to perform extra acts of penance and mortification they usually met with a firm refusal from Madame Louise. But when, to move her, they said they would offer these acts for the King's spiritual welfare they found her opposition easier to overcome. When remonstrated with for the excessive severity of her own mortifications, she answered, weeping : "Consider, I pray, if the King should die, and remember I came here as much for his salvation as for my own, and tell me, can I do too much for a soul so dear to me ?" In these words we find the proof that Madame Louise did indeed offer herself for her father's eternal salvation.

We must now see if her sacrifice was accepted, if she obtained her heart's desire and averted final

impenitence from her father. Several times her hopes rose, but had, perforce, to fall again. In 1757, when the King was stabbed by Damiens, he sent for a priest. Madame Louise almost believed him converted; but his good resolutions ceased as the danger passed, and we have these sad words, written by the Princess to Monsieur Soldini, the chaplain who assisted His Majesty on the occasion :

A year has gone by and there is no change. Could you have believed it, Monsieur l'Abbé, when he sent for you ?

But when death at length became inevitable the King's repentance was sincere and manifest.

We give the facts. On Holy Thursday, 21st March 1774, M. de Beauvais, Bishop of Sénez, was summoned to preach before the King in the chapel of Versailles. This good man was the son of a hatter, and had been raised to the episcopacy by Louis. Afterwards, during the Reign of Terror, he, as the representative of Paris, was called before the National Assembly and refused to take the Revolutionary oath. He took for his text : " Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be destroyed " ; and he threatened with the Divine vengeance those who were obstinate in their guilt. Forcible as was the warning it had no effect ; but—forty days later Louis XV. was dead . . . and the same prophet preaching the funeral oration could recall his prediction.

The King fell ill of small-pox on 2nd April, at Trianon. He had been carried off here, far from his friends, by Madame du Barry and her satellites, and neither his daughters nor his grandson, the Dauphin, were informed of his illness. Some one betrayed the secret, however, and the Royal family considered it a sign of a return to grace that the King suddenly

decided to go back to Versailles. He was advised to take this step by his physicians, Lamartinière and Bordeu. In vain Madame du Barry begged that he should change his mind. No time was lost by Lamartinière in ordering the carriages, and he helped the King into his. He was wearing a dressing-gown. Then the carriage was led at a walk to Versailles. The frightened Court fled from the contagion, and the King's three eldest daughters alone remained to tend him; their sister at St. Denis joined her tears and fervent prayers to theirs. Every two hours, day and night, couriers brought her word from Versailles, while she remained prostrate before the Blessed Sacrament.

Madame de Genlis's testimony to the behaviour and bravery of the Princesses is very beautiful :

It was impossible to enter the room without danger. M. de Létorière died because he half opened the door to look at the King for two minutes. Even the doctors take all sorts of precautions to preserve themselves from the contagion of the fearful disease. But the Princesses, who are younger, and whose health is naturally delicate, remain at the bedside night and day. Every one spoke strongly to them of the danger they ran, but they could not be prevented from fulfilling their duty.

His Carmelite daughter sent him her crucifix, and he answered her gift by loving words. But he was not yet converted. His confessor had not yet been admitted to the Royal room.

"I thank you, Father," writes Madame Louise to her Superior, "for your news of the King, but the arrival of a priest is not much good unless he sees him."

The favourites, however, were not very anxious for the King's conversion. The Duc de Richelieu threatened to throw the Curé of Versailles out of the window if he so much as mentioned the Sacraments.

But Madame Louise never doubted that God would hear her prayers even at the eleventh hour. On 4th May she wrote with a serene, unalterable trust :

To-day is the feast of St. Monica, St. Augustine's mother, and to-morrow the feast of his conversion. May I, under their auspices, find myself the daughter of another Augustine.

She was right to hope. That same day M. de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris, and Cardinal Roche-Aymon had a long interview with the King. When it was over the King sent straightway for Mdme. du Barry, and spoke thus to her : " Madame, I am very ill. I know what it is right for me to do. Go to Rueil to the Duc d'Aiguillon and there await my orders."

She obeyed the following day, in a fury, and when she had left the Palace there was no longer any obstacle to the King's receiving absolution. The Duc de Duras, the King's gentleman-in-waiting, was ordered to bring the confessor. He hesitated, but yielded to the pressing solicitations of the Count de Muy, a good man, who had been a friend and adviser of the late Dauphin, and who was respected even by the worst at Court. The confessor came. He was the Abbé Maudoux, a blind man, whose office had hitherto been a sinecure. This holy man was, in his blindness, a beautiful example of cheerful, bright resignation, as we may learn from this extract from one of his letters :

Providence, whose will we should adore without seeking to understand, willed that I should receive an injury to one eye, which affected its neighbour. I can see nothing with one, and but little with the other. I am like Saul with the witch of Endor. I see ghosts who are a little like people I have known. I tell you, the

Lord keeps special sweets, which He gives only to the blind, and when they throw themselves entirely on Him, He is glad to be their support. “*Experto crede Roberto.*”

The Abbé Maudoux was afterwards Marie Antoinette’s confessor. He now heard the King’s sins and reconciled him to God.

On Friday the 6th of May, the Cardinal Grand Almoner brought the Holy Viaticum to the King. His daughters knelt round him. When he saw the ciborium Louis cast aside the bed-clothes and endeavoured to kneel. In vain they tried to prevent him. He cried out : “When the great God honours a wretched creature like me, by coming Himself to find me, He should at least be welcomed with respect.”

When the King had communicated, the Cardinal read aloud the following formula : “Though it is to God alone that the King owes an account of his conduct, he declares that he repents of the scandal he has given to his subjects, and henceforth desires to live only for the good of religion and the welfare of his people.”

As the Cardinal read the word “repents,” the King, turning on his pillow, called out : ‘Read that again, read it out loud.’ We are reminded by this incident of the last words of Louis XIV. taken down by the Grand Almoner, the first Cardinal de Rohan : “I wish to suffer more. . . . Receive me in my penitence, O great God !”

Those who feel surprised at such Christian words and thoughts following lives so unchristian, will be still more astonished to read the written testimony of Mdme. de Pompadour when she asked to be enrolled—as she was—in the Third Order of St. Francis, Choisy, 17th November 1757 :

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost I commend my soul to God and pray Him to have mercy on me and pardon my

sins, hoping to appease His justice through the body and blood of our Lord.

It was a custom of those days that, after each communion of the King, as well as after his coronation, great numbers of little children who were afflicted with skin disease should come and beg for the purifying touch of the communicant and the traditional prayer of his chaplains, "The King touches thee; may God cure thee." But, for fear of contagion, none came near Louis XV., though they had gone to Louis XIV. after his last communion. Nevertheless, it was well known to all that Louis XV. had, in full consciousness, been reconciled to the Church and received Holy Communion.

At the news, sent by her Superior, Madame Louise could not contain her joy. Here is her "Nunc dimittis":

Ah, father, father, Heaven has heard my prayers! What happiness! I am not at all surprised at what you tell me of the King's dispositions. My joy is complete, since the good God possesses my father's heart.

The King's repentance was real and remained so to the end. He was continually calling on God, begging for holy water, and kissing his daughter's crucifix, as he lay in his last agony.

The final conversion of Louis XV. is an historical fact, and not an imaginary tale related here for effect. The day after his death his grandson and successor, Louis XVI., wrote to his Carmelite aunt:

The graces God bestowed on him were very consoling. He died holding the crucifix and reciting the prayers himself.

Marie Antoinette alludes to it when writing to her mother, 14th May 1774:

MY DEAREST MOTHER—This cruel malady left the King conscious till his last moment, and his end was most edifying.

And Mercy-Argenteau, writing also to Maria Theresa, gives these details :

PARIS, 8th May 1774. Mid-day.

GRACIOUS MAJESTY—It appears that the King of his own accord, without being prompted, asked for his confessor at half-past two this morning. The nobles had their watches in their hands, and counted sixteen minutes during which the confessor was alone with the King, who had him recalled three times before he received Holy Communion. After confession, at five o'clock in the morning the King sent for the Duc d'Aiguillon, and spoke to him in a low voice. They say that he was giving orders for the further removal of the Comtesse du Barry.

VERSAILLES, 10th May. At five o'clock in the evening.

The King has been in his agony since yesterday. In the evening he received Extreme Unction. He expired this afternoon between three and four. He was conscious all the time, and gave evidence up to his last moment of a truly Christian repentance and piety.

Further, the last will and testament of Louis was soon opened, and it makes his repentance very clear. It was dated at a former, but very critical period, when the King had lost his only son. It contained these very explicit words :

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. What follows are my last wishes.

I give back my soul to God, my Creator, and conjure Him to have pity on a great sinner entirely submissive to His holy will and to the decisions of His Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I pray the Blessed Virgin, and all the Saints, particularly my patron St. Louis, to intercede for me with Jesus Christ, my Divine Redeemer and Saviour, that He may obtain for me pardon of my sins, who have so often offended and so ill served Him. I ask pardon of all those I may have offended or scandalised, and beg them to forgive me and pray for my soul.

O God, who knowest all things, pardon all the faults and sins I have committed. Thou art merciful and full of goodness. I await Thy judgment trembling with fear and hope.

Thus was the sacrifice of Madame Louise accepted, and in this manner was she rewarded even in this life. Great as was her sorrow for her father, her joy in his conversion was far greater.

God while exacting this sacrifice from me, has sweetened it, and I am consoled when I think of the graces the King received during his last hours, and of how well he seems to have profited by them. If it rested with me to call the King back to life, I declare I should not willingly plunge him again into the midst of the dangers which besiege a throne, and risk his soul a second time.

The Princess now devoted the remainder of her life to the acquirement of superabundant merits, which should shorten her father's time in Purgatory. She wrote to her confidant, Cardinal de Bernis, Ambassador at Rome :

You owe this debt of gratitude to the best of masters, as I owe it to the best of fathers. Let us work no more for our own salvation, save in working for his.

Again and again she repeated her own prayer for the souls in Purgatory :

O my God, truly those who groan in the purifying flames are guilty, but Thou lovest them, and art sorry that Thou must punish them. Thou desirest to see them united to Thee, which can only be when expiation has been offered for their sins. It is, then, for Thy glory that I work when by my prayers and good works I hasten their entrance into heaven.

Lord, Thy gifts enriched them in life, at their death they were fortified by Thy august Presence. When Thou hast granted pardon to the souls I loved on earth, wilt Thou unite me once more with them in the eternal happiness of heaven?

CHAPTER IV

HER STRUGGLE

WHEN Madame Louise became a nun, she wished to be a religious not only in name but in fact, and for this reason she chose a real monastery.

Every one knows that at the end of the eighteenth century many religious houses had become very relaxed. A Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori, speaks thus strongly of some convents in his diocese :

A houseful of enclosed women who are an annoyance to themselves, their Bishop, and all around them.

He wisely adds :

When the rules are not observed it would be far better to disband the nuns, free them from their vows, and allow them to return to their homes. What good can it do to keep in the diocese a number of shut-up, discontented women, who have little love for God and give small edification to others ?

But the Carmelites, reformed by St. Theresa, were far from deserving such reproaches, and their Royal novice was distinguished among them by her fervent attention to the observances. It is true that she had a long struggle with her superiors because they tried to lessen for her the rigour of the rule. They could not forget that she was a Princess of the Blood

Royal, and their conduct was marked by continual deference.

From the first her "angel," Mdlle. de MacMahon, had given her good advice on this subject: "You may be quite sure that they will do their best to alleviate the rule greatly for you, and will continually offer you something quite out of the common. You may, of course, accept all this and still edify us by the comparison with your condition in the world. But if you take my advice, you will not be a Carmelite by halves."

The Princess was decidedly of the same opinion. She wished to drink her cup of penance to the dregs. She revolted against all the exceptions they tried to make in her favour, and protested, perhaps a little sharply, against tokens of exaggerated respect, which she calls "the expiation of her birth." She writes :

Sister Theresa of St. Augustine, or any other Carmelite, it is all the same, save that she is the least virtuous of all.

If she obstinately resisted, her motive was a good one, so the strife between her and her superiors went on without truce or rest. Now one side, now the other, could claim the victory. Only when the canon of obedience was brought to bear, would Madame Louise give up her resolution to be treated as the least and lowest in the convent. On the whole, perhaps, the victory was hers, but on some points even her holy persistence could not prevail.

One matter on which Madame Louise was most intractable was that her Court title "Madame" should for ever disappear, and that of Sister Theresa of St. Augustine, her religious name, take its place. She writes :

I look with suspicion on all that recalls my old name. I am so afraid of not really shedding my old husk that I fly from everything, even good things, which could recall it to myself or to others. I would wish never to have been a King's daughter, since it seems I should have made a better Carmelite.

On this point she eventually triumphed, but not without trouble. On the very day of her arrival, when the Prioress called her Madame, she answered quickly: "Madame! Why do you so call me, Reverend Mother? I well know that Carmelite postulants are not called 'Madame,' but Sister. I pray you not to forget that I have just renounced every title and distinction for ever, which might flatter worldly vanity. When I have deserved a penance, let me know of it by calling me Madame."

At first the Prioress thought it wrong to accede to this desire, and the title Madame remained in use, much to its owner's sorrow. In answer to a Carmelite who wrote to her without it, she says :

I love you very much, Mother, because in your letters I don't come across all these titles [*augusteries*].

Monsieur Bertin, on the contrary, gave her the obnoxious title, and to him she humorously writes :

Don't be surprised if I call you "Monsieur"—I dare not call a person "Father" who calls me "Madame." You know that the titles given me in religion are far dearer to me than all those I could have in the world.

Again, it is to the Abbé Bertin that she repeats her wishes on this subject which is so near and dear to her :

With all the respect I owe you, Father, you are a strange man to think that when I ask you to write to me without ceremony, I am making an act of humility. Well then, learn, Monsieur l'Abbé

Bertin, and honoured Father, that it was no humility, but rather a return to old worldly habits. Had I thought as Sister Theresa of St. Augustine I should have allowed my Reverend Superior to treat me as he thought best, but, remembering that I was once Madame Louise, I wrote as is the custom among the Princesses of France. When they have been corresponding with any one for some time, they no longer wish to hear of respect, but expect to be obeyed. So then Monsieur l'Abbé Bertin will no longer put "Madame" at the head of his letter; he will withdraw the "respect" and "servant" from the end of his letter, and the third person from the whole of it. Such is the will of Madame Louise, and the wish of Sister Theresa of St. Augustine.

A preacher having addressed her from the pulpit as "Madame," she afterwards said to him: "Since you call the Carmelites 'dames,' make no one jealous, and call us all 'mesdames.'"

Other preachers continuing, according to Court custom, to compliment her in the beginning and end of their sermons, she wittily reproached them: "Your sermons remind me of a dish of fish—only good between the head and tail."

She writes to a Carmelite in the Convent of Tournay:

I beg you to omit the "Madame" from your letter when you write to us, because I am "Mother"; and it is far more glorious to be Mother or Sister of Carmel than Madame Louise of France. The one title leads to nothing, while the other, if we know its true value, gives us a right to heaven.

At last, as they would not heed her, she appealed to her father, but he did not take her part, answering: "I am not surprised that they find it hard to call you Sister." However, in the end, the Prioress, worn out by her insistence, gave an order that Madame Louise was to be known by no other name than Theresa of St. Augustine, and her cause was gained. She thus announces her victory:

Thanks be to God, since the last Chapter I am called Sister, that name so sweet in my ears. It is thus I hope you will always think of me, as a simple nun of St. Denis.

The community tried to shower other honours on their Royal member. The Prioress told her to stay beside her at recreation, to go first to the altar rails to receive Holy Communion, and the Royal carpet and cushions were left in the choir for her, though Madame Louise never used them. She cried out in vain against these distinctions; the Prioress remained firm, and the other nuns agreed with her. Again the distressed Carmelite had recourse to her father, and this time he helped her to gain her point. He wrote as follows:—

VERSAILLES, 17th April 1770.

I received your letter yesterday, dear daughter, as I was coming from Mass. Your letters can never trouble me, provided I need not answer them till I find it convenient.

It is difficult for them to forget who you are, and they cannot treat you like a street girl. The carpet is unnecessary after the first time, and should not be used when your sisters go alone to see you. You know how they look on such things, and how little I myself like this sort of reception. At communion and in the refectory you might ask the Superioress to put you after the other nuns, provided you obey her in everything she commands. Take heed lest by doing too much yourself, you should miss fulfilling your vocation.

On another point it seemed as if heaven itself intervened. Carmelites have no seats except in the church and refectory. Everywhere else they simply squat on their heels. Though they have often to kneel a very long time in church they have nothing on which to rest their elbows. In spite of much advice to the contrary, Madame Louise attempted to kneel without support, as all the other nuns did. But nature protested against the unaccustomed strain, and

when she had knelt some time she was prostrated by great pain and faintness. She was obliged to consent to use a *prie-dieu*, and as there was no such thing in the convent, one had to be procured from Versailles. But it was of little use. The Princess was ashamed of her weakness and disliked the exceptional indulgence. In the end her strong will conquered her weak body, and by God's help she was able to kneel a long time without any support. The *prie-dieu* was taken to the infirmary, and is preserved to this day. It is made of massive oak, and the arms of France, which at first decorated it, have been replaced by those of Carmel. For some years it was in the study of the Abbé le Rebours, parish priest of the Madeleine in Paris and Superior of the Carmelites. It has been the inanimate witness of many holy prayers, and not a few people have come to the Rue de la Ville d'Evêque to look with a pious interest on this relic of Madame Louise.

She attributed her sudden strength to the intercession of a newly canonised saint, St. Aloysius Gonzaga, a relative of her dear mother, who during her lifetime had made great efforts to obtain his canonisation. It was on account of this relationship that in 1775 *The Exercises of Devotion to St. Aloysius Gonzaga* were dedicated to Madame Louise by their author, Père de la Clorivière.

There was a fresh struggle when Madame Louise learnt that certain postulants had been refused admission because their education was not such as would fit them to be the companions of a Royal Princess. She interceded so strongly for them that she triumphed, saying: "These human considerations would be contrary to St. Theresa's spirit. I beg you not to give them a thought." She wished for no alleviations

of the rule for herself. "Have I come into religion," she said, "to seek my own comfort and convenience?" She will have no exceptions for "a *ci-devant* Princess with so many bad habits to correct, whom every one seems afraid to advise."

The Prioress insisted on her having a mattress, but in time she ~~was~~ allowed to discard it, and sleep, like the other nuns, on a straw palliass.

One day she learnt that the Superiors were thinking of moderating the general severities of the house. She guessed at once that it was on her account, and she was not mistaken. She showed her disapproval more and more energetically till it practically amounted to a threat. To the Superior she says: "I hear you, Father, and I imagine you saying, 'It would be well, on Madame Louise's account, to introduce some relaxations into this house.' But you well know that before I came I knew its observances, and that I chose it for its edifying regularity. If my presence is to weaken its fervour, and you persist in your project, I declare that I could no longer remain amongst people to whom I had wrought such harm. I should straightway ask permission to pass into another of our monasteries."

She prevailed once more, and repeated again and again: "I clearly see that you never forget what I was in the world. Try, I beg you, to forget it, once for all; but if the thought will recur, may it be to remind you that on that very account I have more need of penance than others."

✓ From the first she saw that some of the older nuns were anxious to obtain various mitigations for her. She reasoned thus with them, and gained her point: "Forgive me for wishing to escape from your indulgence, but if I do not accustom myself to the

austerities of the rule from the beginning, how shall I ever practise it?"

She brings out the same motive in another encounter.

The Prioress noticed that Madame Louise's foot was hurt by the Carmelite sandals. They were made of cord and wood without any arch for the instep or heel, and must indeed have been trying to delicate feet, accustomed only to Court shoes. Different footgear was ordered for her, but she successfully evaded the innovation, saying: "Ah, Mother, let me have the worst at first; I must come to it sooner or later."

On the question of a confessor, she was obliged by order to accept a privilege. Her own wish was to confide her conscience to the care of the Abbé Douzanville, the community's chaplain. Her superiors would not permit this, and it was judged best that she should keep the confessor she had at Versailles, the Abbé du Ternay. He was to live in a little house, just outside the monastery. Its occupant, the Vicomtesse de Cheylas, vacated it, and the Abbé du Ternay there lived and died in the shadow of Carmel. After his death the Princess was allowed to confess to the convent confessor, at this time the Abbé Consolin, Canon Opportune of Paris. He was assisted by the Abbé Mai.

She had to endure another mark of respect which moved her to useless protests. It became the custom that on occasions of professions, receptions, and other general meetings, the Princess should not, like the other nuns, go round the Chapter room, embracing each in turn, but that all the nuns should come to her to receive the kiss of peace. To us this distinction seems very small, but it was a cause of real pain to her.

Till her last hour this earnest, passionate struggle against all singularity went on. When Madame Louise was dying in the convent infirmary those about her told her how much better she could be cared for, if she would use the room which had been set apart for her father's visits while he lived. "Oh, doubtless, it would be much more comfortable," she answered; "but one does not come here for comfort. In sickness and in health one should remember one is a Carmelite. . . . In everything we should follow the established rule."

She spoke resignedly of her sorrow that she could not hear a last Mass. It was suggested that she should use her Royal privilege, and have an altar for Mass erected in the infirmary. "Don't you see," she said, "that you propose a distinction quite out of place. In life and death I wish to be a simple Carmelite."

At the very end, when one of the Sisters wished to lay her poor dying head upon a pillow, Madame Louise would not let her, but rested it on the usual block of wood, whispering her last protest: "Do you want to treat me like a Princess here, Sister?"

CHAPTER V

VISITORS TO ST. DENIS

THE parlour in a Carmelite convent is a bare little room furnished with three plain chairs. The visitor is confronted with an iron grating forbidding him to go any further, and beyond this nothing is visible but a thick black curtain. The Carmelite, who receives her friends without either seeing or being seen by them, remains on the other side of the grating and curtain. She sometimes kneels and sometimes sits on a little bare wooden bench. Occasionally, if the visitor is a father or a mother, the curtain is drawn aside, but even then the nun's lowered veil covers half her face, so that only a mouth, chin, and crossed hands can be seen.

Had Madame Louise's visitors been able to see through the curtain they would have beheld a little Carmelite working away at some plain sewing. She talked and answered questions brightly and cheerfully, but received people for as short a time as possible. Madame de Genlis is our authority for this : "Madame Louise allows one to ask her questions and replies kindly but briefly."

The Princess herself speaks to the same effect : "In the parlour I retained my rights as Madame

Louise to send away any one, even in the middle of a conversation, if they talked too long."

Many visitors came to see Madame Louise—too many for her taste: "Every one wishes to see me, as though I were a prize ox."

She thought a nun should not be too often in the parlour.

"Visits from relations," she said, "are a great torment for nuns in general, and are, above all, harmful for a Carmelite. It is before God that we see our relations, most usefully for them and for us. At the moment when I have a visit from my family I am filled with joy; when it is over I am in peace. . . . I continue to receive no one. I mean to say that I receive no one but my family; I have sent away the Chancellor and M. de la Vrillière." The latter was Corresponding Minister of State.

Her resistance became even stronger when it was a question of refusing to permit strangers to enter the cloister: "When it is necessary to prevent people entering the cloister, then only shall I remember that I am the King's daughter."

One day the mother of a novice brought a special dispensation from the Pope, permitting her to visit the house; the Princess received the brief through the grating, read it, and answered: "We also, Madame, hold a brief, which this one does not revoke, and which forbids us to allow any secular person to enter the enclosure without the unanimous consent of the nuns."

Another day a relation of the Princess, the Princess de Conti, though neither a daughter nor granddaughter of the King, thought that a special brief would entitle her to enter the enclosure. Madame Louise gave orders that this time her

cousin was to be admitted, but warned her firmly that the visit was not to be repeated.

She got permission from her father and from all her relations that their suites should not profit by the dispensation in favour of royalty, to accompany their patrons into the convent. Louis XV. left even his Captain of the Guard at the gate, saying to him : "I shall be well guarded by the Carmelites."

One day the Princess went so far as to shut the door on her nephews—all three of whom reigned afterwards—begging them not to use their rights during Advent.

However, a contemporary discovery menaced the privacy of the cloister from an unexpected direction. One day Madame Louise perceived a balloon over the monastery garden. She pretended to be very much afraid, and wrote to Cardinal de Bernis (1784) :

I thank God it did not fall in our enclosure. If this continues, no one can feel safe in his own home any more ; company will fall from the skies like hail. How far will the folly of balloons go, since even a Carmelite occupies herself with them?—truly much more for the sake of the poor men who are shut up in them than for the consequences which may follow from them, and I pray a great deal for these men.

This balloon, one of the first launched since the discovery the preceding year at Annonay by Montgolfier, was called the "Marie Antoinette." It started from Versailles, in presence of Louis XVI. and his guest the King of Sweden, Gustavus III. After hovering over St. Denis, it proceeded and came to the ground in the forest of Chantilly. The uneasiness of Madame Louise about the occupants of this balloon, who were the scientist Proust and the learned Pilâtre

des Rosiers, might almost have been prophetic, since the latter died the following year from the effects of an aerial accident.

The popular enthusiasm displayed at that time for aeronauts was not respected by the great wits, who thought little of a vessel which sailed in the air if it could not be guided there.

“Up to the present,” wrote the Marquise de Créquy in her *Souvenirs* of that time—and she might perhaps repeat it after the lapse of a century—“up to the present, it appears to me that the discovery of M. Montgolfier is no more important, and no more useful, than if he had invented a kite large enough to lift one or two men and sustain them in the air.

I could never understand the advantage of being able to go far and fast if one cannot go where one wishes !”

Amongst the visitors to Carmel, I shall mention first Madame Campan, a lady whom I shall not always greatly praise, but whose haste on this occasion did her honour.

The moment I received permission I was at St. Denis to see my august and holy mistress ; she was glad to see me, and received me, with her veil up, in her parlour.

Madame Campan, about whom there has been so much discussion, was both clever and honest, but her writings suffer through their inaccuracy and the spirit of levity which pervades them. She left the service of Madame Louise when the latter entered religion, and it was forty years later that she wrote her *Mémoires*. It may then have been that she forgot rather than purposely misstated many facts concerning her first mistress. Her fidelity to Marie Antoinette in misfortune proves the solidity of her early training with the pious Princess Louise. We ought also to bear in mind that the first Catholic

chapel opened under the Directoire, which had previously shown itself so opposed to them, was attached to the school started by Madame Campan at St. Germain; that it was she who introduced the precept and practice of religion into the programme of the daughters of the Legion of Honour at Ecoen; and that, finally, she gave an example of a worthy Christian death in her retreat at Nantes.

We must also cite among the visitors the Comte de Maurepas, Minister of Louis XV., who was disgraced and exiled to his castle of Pontchartrain under Mesdames Pompadour and Du Barry, and recalled to office later by the young King, Louis XVI. A singer of songs he was, and yet an upright and economic administrator. A "luminous spirit" La Fayette calls him.

"The certainty I have," wrote Louis XVI., "of your honesty, of your knowledge of affairs, and of your prudence, makes me ask you to come and assist me by your counsel."

The Duke de Lévis, who survived till the reign of Charles X., had been associated with Maurepas at the Court of Louis XVI., and sums up his character thus :

He showed his disinterestedness in a position in which it is easy to accumulate millions without the public being able to distinguish between the depredations of the Minister and the generosity of the King. Enemy of pomp and luxury, he never made a display of power. He limited his entertaining to the giving of a plain supper every evening, Madame de Maurepas asking a few friends for the game of *loto*. . . . Without being a genius, he was truly a man of wit and sense. He was also skilful in business, experienced and discerning.

Science, in the persons of La Condamine, Mau-

pertius, and Jussieu, owed much to the enlightened taste of this amiable benefactor.

His retiring nature often led him to Carmel, where in privacy he might practise special devotions. It may be on this account that Voltaire so radically alters his first opinion of Maurepas. At one time he addressed to him emphatically eulogistic verses :

Wise mind and brilliant, created by Heaven
Both to please the subjects and serve their Sovereign.¹

But Voltaire changes angrily from sugar to vinegar when writing thus to Condorcet :

You know the Count de Maurepas, his weakness, his frivolity, and his jealousy of all superior talents !

The Count's strongest recommendation is that the philosophers disliked him, and as he distinguished himself by his reserve amidst a dissolute society, Condorcet calmly abused him.

The antagonism of Madame de Pompadour also sheds honour on Maurepas. Like Voltaire, her first opinion was favourable. She wrote :

No Minister ever worked so much nor so quickly. His correspondence is a masterpiece of precision !

But afterwards she was angry, for Maurepas refused to cringe before her :

He has always treated me with great hauteur and pride. Work made him severe and almost inapproachable. I learnt one day that he had spoken ill of me. I told the King. He was ordered to leave the Court.

Though we may respect the Minister for his high

¹ Esprit sage et brillant, que le ciel a fait naître
Et pour plaire aux sujets et pour servir leur Maître.

principles and for his pious journeys to St. Denis, we must not conclude that he would allow narrow conventional scruples to interfere with his public business. On the contrary, a relation of his, the Count d'Alonville, relates how when Maurepas recommended the services of Turgot to Louis XVI., and the King objected that Turgot seldom went to Mass, Maurepas answered pleasantly: "Ah, Sire, do not hesitate at that. The Abbé Ternay goes daily, although Your Majesty dismissed him as an extortioner and a libertine."

Such was the personality, large-minded, open, cheerful, whom the recluse of St. Denis held in such great esteem.

But the greater number of her visitors were ecclesiastics.

The Representative of the Holy See often brought blessings and remembrances from Clement XIV. M. Giraud, the Nuncio who had presided at the reception of Madame Louise, had left France soon after, to receive from the Pope the Archbishopric of Ravenna and the Cardinal's hat. Later still he became Secretary of State to Pope Pius VI. His successor as Nuncio at Paris was Prince Doria Phamphili, Archbishop of Amathonte, a prelate of twenty-two, familiarly called in France the "Pope's Brief," not only because he was very small, but because he spoke so little.

"Dwarf in figure," wrote the Marquise de Créquy, "but so regular, so modest, so spiritual, and so worthy, that ridicule could not be applied to him."

The most regular visitor welcomed at the grille was the holy Archbishop of Paris, Christopher de

Beaumont, the Athanasius of his century, a pillar of orthodoxy and Confessor of the Faith, who suffered exile for his firmness. The Marquise de Créquy met him in Rome when he was eighteen, and remarked that he was even then "modest as an angel." Later she drew the portrait of the intrepid Prelate :

When his eyes were cast down, his pale, severe face had in it something inanimate, sepulchral, almost deathly. But when his great black eyes shone upon you, those eyes whose open glance was so profoundly alive, so penetrating and so steady, you felt dazzled with his burning desire for the triumph of his faith. You were compelled to venerate him.

The Archbishop of Paris was another of those glorified by the sarcasms of Voltaire: "He had the mien of a martyr. It made me angry."

Madame Louise revered this strong-minded Prelate, the first confidant of her vocation, her sure and wise guide in difficult circumstances. During their long intercourse she herself sustained him with her invincible energy. When he could not come to the parlour she wrote to him to revive his courage, which was so sorely tried :

Permit me to ask you, should it be at the moment when you have most need of courage that you should let yourself be overthrown? Surely not. God who has always upheld you will uphold you still. I beg Him without ceasing to console you.

These verses, printed under the popular portraits of the Prelate, paint him exactly :

In his morals austere, in his words all truth,
The Spirit of God in him kindles and glows ;
Whether free or in irons, he can in good sooth
Link the faith of Athanasius with the strength of Ambrose.¹

¹ Austère dans ses mœurs, vrai dans tous ses discours,
Plein de l'Esprit de Dieu qui l'anime et l'embrace ;
Ou libre ou dans les fers, il sut joindre toujours
La fermeté d'Ambroise à la foi d'Athanase.

Then there was M. de la Rivière, Bishop of Troy, who had preached at the reception of Madame Louise. He was another rock of the Church, and waged a constant war against Jansenism and other sects.

Voltaire, with his accustomed raillery, pays an unconscious tribute to this bishop's indomitable energy :

The Bishop of Troy has been forbidden to print orders. It is like forbidding the Countess of Pimbesche to plead.¹

Shortly after, writing to the Countess de Lützelbourg, he rejoices that the Prelate is exiled to the distant Abbey of Meurback :

A confessor, a martyr, has been sent into your Alsace ; the saints are queer people !

To vanquish the Bishop's constancy they loaded him with fines ; they sold his furniture by auction ; they seized his revenues through his tenants ; they exiled him ; but they could not reduce him to submission.

M. de la Motte, the old Bishop of Amiens, formerly Superior of St. Denis, also came and was edified by Madame Louise, who in her letters calls him " My dear grandpapa." One day, on leaving the parlour, he wrote :

I came back dissatisfied with myself, and determined to serve God less laxly than in the past.

This holy man converted Gresset ; he also it was who burnt *L'Ouvroir de nos Sœurs*, an objectionable

¹ *Les Plaideurs*. Racine.

song which formed part of the pretty little poem *Vert, Vert*.

Voltaire qualifies the old Bishop as "a simple man, they say, but Jesuitical and fanatical." This remark refers to the action of the Bishop on one occasion, when a notorious sacrilege was committed in his diocese of Amiens during his episcopacy. It was the mutilation of a Calvary on the bridge at Abbeville by the Chevalier de la Barre. The Bishop proceeded, according to the duty of his office, to perform the expiatory ceremonies, and thus earned the censure of the philosophers, as did also the judges, charged, independently of him, with applying to the profanators the laws of the time.

There was a new explosion of Voltarian anger against the same Bishop of Amiens when the latter wrote a sorrowful pamphlet on the suppression of the Jesuits. The old man was unwilling to take the extorted condemnation as final. He wrote to a priest friend, M. Soldini of Versailles, referring to the Jesuits :

I still use the title of Father to those whom I see every day, and to those who write to me ; because it is only their exterior estate that is changed. Those who have despoiled them could not take from them what they were given by their holy vows. . . . I cannot accustom myself to this abolition, and I have not ceased giving them marks of my esteem and friendship.

In the eyes of Voltaire this pamphlet could only have come from the pen of an idiot.

"For a long time," he wrote, "the poor devil has not had the power of thought ! He has come to his second childhood, and you will see that some ex-Jesuit has made him sign this letter !"

Nevertheless, this "soft-brained person" was the

good shepherd of his flock. Indeed, soon after the appearance of these libels of Voltaire's, we see M. de la Motte emptying his purse to pay for the disasters resulting from a tremendous fire which had ruined the inhabitants of Abbeville, and then selling for the same purpose all his holy vessels and ornaments.

Madame Louise wished to emulate the good Bishop's generosity. She bought from him the things he sold, stipulating that they should remain in his use during his lifetime.

M. de Roquelaure, Bishop of Senlis, First Almoner of the King, and member of the French Academy, had preached at the profession of Madame Louise. He showed afterwards that his relations with the Princess had fortified his soul, for he learnt bravely to confess Jesus Christ in the prisons of the Terror. contemporary *mémoires*, written before the Revolution, represent him as "the most amiable of men, witty, full of gaiety and humour, but never overstepping the borders of reserve. His gentle piety did not manifest itself by tormenting others."

The old Cardinal de Luynes, Archbishop of Sens, and President of the Bureau of Religious Communities, was another vigorous champion of the Church and of morals. He loved the holy daughter of Louis XV. who, when he was First Almoner to her sister-in-law the Dauphine, had held him in great esteem. At her desire he often came to St. Denis to preside at ceremonies of reception and profession.

The Bishop of Dax, M. de Neuville, wrote thus his impressions of the parlour :

I have had the honour to see the Princess several times since my arrival, and to be alone with her in the parlour on several occasions. I am enchanted with her love of the rule, and especially of silence. She is infinitely exact about not opening the grating, and she seems far from desiring visitors.

M. de Neuville afterwards refused the Revolution oath; Bonapart, during the Concordat, named him for the Bishopric of Poitiers.

Madame Louise cordially liked M. de Bonal, the successor of Massillon to the See of Clermont. She wrote to him when he left for his diocese :

I could not have believed that I should still be as sensitive as I am, after all the sacrifices I have made to become a Carmelite.

This prelate came to the grille for advice from the Carmelite. She even sent him counsel by letter, and these letters, chiefly concerning the observances of Lent, bear witness to the amicable confidence between them.

M. de Bonal was elected a member of the Estates General and of the National Assembly, and when Turgot, "in the name of the God of Peace," exhorted the Clerical Deputies to unite with the Revolutionary "Tiers Etat," the Bishop of Clermont replied sternly : "The God of Peace! Yes! But He is also the God of Order and Justice!"

Later he found courage to protest energetically in the Tribune against Treilhard's motion aimed at the religious Orders. He was again in the breach to denounce as a sacrilege the constitutional oath, demanded from the clergy.

While I recall what I owe to Cæsar, I cannot hide from myself what I owe to God.

In 1792 M. de Bonal was turned out of his See by the intruder Périér. He then emigrated, and died, a Confessor of the Faith, at Munich, 3rd September 1800.

In 1778 an Italian Bishop presented himself in the parlour. He bore a brief of introduction from the Pope to Madame Louise, which ran :

Your attachment to us, and well-known devotion to the Apostolic See, do not allow us to doubt that you will give a new proof of both by kindly receiving our dear son, Romuald Honnesti, our Private Chamberlain, whom we have specially charged to salute you from us and to give you proofs of our paternal benevolence towards you. We have sent him to France to carry the Cardinal's hat, the distinctive mark of the dignity which we have lately bestowed on our dear sons, Dominic de la Rochefoucauld, Archbishop of Rouen, and Louis de Guéménée.

Count Honnesti is our sister's son, and on this account, but still more because of the hope his goodness of character gives us of his future virtues, we have a particular affection for him. Persuaded as we are of the kindness with which you will receive him, we should fear to add other recommendations.

Another and still more celebrated prelate did not omit when he was in Paris going to salute the recluse at the grating of her parlour, and writing to her often and at length when his Diplomatic functions kept him away. This active and devoted friend was the Cardinal de Bernis.

For many this name will call up only the image of a bedecked, frivolous, futile, figure. This is because they confound the two halves of a long life, two halves totally different. The two Bernis are distinguished by Sainte-Beuve with great wisdom and insight. Up to the age of forty Bernis fluttered about—a pretty little drawing-room epicurean, a warbler much appreciated at supper parties, celebrating fables, loves, and

zephyrs in couplets with a charming grace. This flowery poet and frivolous tattler gave a pension to Madame de Pompadour, and was called by Voltaire, justly enough, "Babbler and flower-girl." His lively qualities raised him to honours: the Academy called him at twenty-nine; he was Minister of State and Cardinal shortly after. Without taking holy orders he was provided with rich benefices—the Abbey of St. Médard de Soissons, the Abbey of Trois Fontaines, and the Priory of Charité-sur-Loire. Then he ceased to please Madame de Pompadour, and Louis XV. exiled him from Court.

This disgrace opens a wholly new period in the life of Bernis. The solitude in which he now lived for five years in the Retreat of Vic-sur-Aisne, near Soissons, was salutary to his soul. Trial manifested God to him; he came to God sincerely and for ever. It is quite certain that his youthful frivolities had never gone hand in hand with blasphemy or irreligion according to the fashion of the time:

I do not join impiety
To the weaknesses of nature.¹

Even during his wasted years he had dedicated in a Christian manner, to the refutation of Lucretius, Pyrrhon, and Spinoza, a poem entitled "Religion Avenged," of which this verse remains:

There must be a God to have created a worm.

But, indeed, the life of Bernis, although he was a Cardinal, had not up to the time of his disgrace anything ecclesiastical in it. From that time, however, he entered seriously into the spirit of his profession.

¹ Je ne joins pas l'impiété
Aux faiblesses de la nature.

"I am bound to my state," he wrote to his friend Pâris-Duvernay, "and I have put so much reflection into this step that I hope never to repent of it."

He began by paying his debts and being ordained priest; a short time later he had himself consecrated bishop. He became the third bishop of his name to rule the See of Alby, and gave himself up altogether to the duties of his pastoral charge. The Cardinal's zeal was active and his charity immense during the five years he remained in his diocese. Louis XV. then appointed him his Ambassador at Rome. We are far now from "The Tattler's Basket," or "The Epistles to Chloë." The converted prelate lived in the strictest dignity.

Cardinal Loménie de Brienne thus spoke of the serious labours of his colleague Bernis:

"He does everything himself," he said; "his secretaries have never been anything but copyists. I can prove it."

At Rome, Bernis was splendid almost to ostentation in the exercise of a hospitality commanded by his office. This was commended by French travellers in Italy at that time, especially by Madame de Genlis, President Dupaty, and the austere Roland himself, the future Girondin, who expressed himself in these words:

Giving to all the world, receiving from none. His easy politeness, always shown towards all, gives him an ascendancy, which his high sentiments sustain in an imposing manner.

But in the midst of this exterior pomp the Cardinal was severe to himself, frugal and penitent as a monk. Madame Lebrun attests it in her *Mémoires*:

"I have been to dine with our Ambassador," she writes. "He

had invited several strangers to a party of the Diplomatic body, so that we were thirty at the table. The Cardinal did the honours perfectly, only eating himself a little dish of vegetables."

French art can never forget that the Cardinal Ambassador founded the great National School of France at Rome, with all its local immunities and all its pontifical privileges, which make it like a palace of the Embassy.

A reproach has fallen on this second edifying portion of a long life. It has been said that Bernis, as Ambassador, was eager to procure the final order for the suppression of the Jesuits, which was in the end extracted, by the insolent demands of the Spanish Ministry, from the feebleness of Clement XIV. It is a mistake. His functions as an Ambassador made him the unconvinced interpreter of thoughts which were not his own. Thus, when the Society of Jesus was struck in France, the Cardinal wrote to Voltaire :

I do not believe that the destruction of the Jesuits will be beneficial to France.

When the Spanish Ambassador, Florida Bianca, pursued at Rome the persevering campaign of the Government of Charles III. against the Order, Bernis was officially commanded by his Government to support with the Pope the demands of this friendly and allied Power, he ceaselessly worked, however, to gain time, to weaken the ultimatums of Spain, and to temper the rigorous hatred of the demands. He was moderator and breakwater, as he himself declared, between the Holy See and the Spanish Cabinet. "I am the calmer of both sides."

Thus he made possible to Clement XIV. a passive resistance against which impatient and irritated Spain

could not triumph except after four years of fiery struggles and angry threatenings.

During the Conclave which terminated in the election of Cardinal Ganganelli to the Sovereign Pontificate, Bernis positively refused to be the organ of a proposition suggested by Spain. This demanded that before the election each candidate should sign an engagement to suppress the Society of Jesus as soon as he should wear the triple crown. Bernis unhesitatingly declared that such an agreement would be illicit and simoniacal.

On 12th April 1769 he wrote :

To demand of a future Pope the promise in writing or before witnesses, that he will destroy the Jesuits, would be to palpably endanger the honour of crowns, by the violation of all canonical rules. If a cardinal were capable of making such a bargain, one could only believe him still more capable of breaking it. An instructed priest or bishop could neither propose nor accept such conditions.

It is not as an enemy that the Cardinal predicts, as we find in his authentic *Mémoires*, the resurrection of the Jesuits :

Clement XIV. would have been better pleased to have been treated with more consideration in the affair of the Jesuits, in which it may be said that the Pope was used too cavalierly and sometimes even with violence. . . .

It would not be impossible that under a new pontificate they might recover their fall, and regain little by little part of the land they have lost.

We see on which side lay the personal sympathies of the Ambassador, though in accordance with his instructions he concealed them, and helped to force the Pope against his own will.

Critics have equally blamed the courteous inter-

course which Bernis even in his days of wisdom kept up with Voltaire. The Cardinal, indeed, showed himself to the end gracious and tolerant towards this his fellow-academician. He wrote of "Voltaire whom I look upon as the finest spirit of his age." But he was in the right on this point, and his admiration did not blind him to the man's faults. There was nothing pedantic or quarrelsome in the virtue of Bernis; he answered wittily and amiably when provoked by Voltaire; but he did so as a lesson: he praised what was good in Voltaire, in order to persuade him to sacrifice the rest.

"Gather together," he wrote, "the flashes of virtue, of humanity, of love of the general good, scattered through your works. Compose of them a book which would cause men to love your soul as much as they admire your intellect. You will find in your heart, in your genius, in your well-furnished memory, all that might make this work a masterpiece."

It would seem to us to-day that to propose to Voltaire the editing of a moral display (*morale en action*) was to deceive oneself greatly. The language of Bernis writing to Voltaire is far from giving any suspicion of compromise, though it is the language of an indulgent benevolence.

The reader may perhaps pardon the Bishop's lenience towards this great intellect when he learns that St. Liguori, a canonised Doctor of the Church, believing in Voltaire's conversion as reported by himself, addressed to him this naïvely expressed and touching congratulation, advising the great cheat, as Bernis had done, to compose a work of moral reparation :

"I, who send you this letter," wrote the paternal old man, "am a Bishop, nearly consumed with many infirmities, whom the



Neurdein, Phot.

THE KING WITH HIS DAUGHTER AT THE CONVENT OF ST. DENIS.



Sovereign Pontiff has deigned to permit to discharge the duties of his diocese of St. Agatha of the Goths. In these days of my extreme old age of eighty-two years, it was so pleasant to me to hear of your happy change, a subject of joy to all good Catholics, that I could not help writing you this letter, such as it is, to congratulate you with all my heart. I have suffered and wept to see you for so many years make such a bad use of the truly great genius that God has given you. I have addressed my prayers to God, that He, the Father of Mercies, would deliver you from the errors which you held, would draw you altogether to His love. That which I so ardently desired has happened. This event—I say what I think—this event is more advantageous to the Church than the indefatigable efforts of one hundred companies of evangelical workers would have been.

Nevertheless, so that everywhere and in every way the common joy may be perfect, and that no doubt may remain of your conversion, I should wish to see you, by the publication of a writing, repair your errors and your sophisms, and even repulse the attacks of a recent writer [Jean Jacques Rousseau] who has not feared to attack dogmas of faith to the great detriment of so many young men, who, through love of liberty, have dared to despise their soul and God. I know that you suffer from your eyes; but a dictation on your part would be enough for every one, and principally for those who try to throw doubt on what you have done, as if it were a deception. While waiting, I shall pray God to give you the strength, if not to write, at least to dictate something against the infidelities of this time. May God preserve you!

Cardinal de Bernis, then, finds himself in holy company among the more or less duped correspondents of Voltaire.

The friend of Madame Louise knew how to show himself worthy of her when calamity came. Louis XVI. had continued resting in Bernis the confidence of his grandfather, and had maintained him as Ambassador at Rome. Here the Cardinal learnt that a sacrilegious oath was about to be exacted from all the priests of his country. To refuse it meant to renounce his benefices, four hundred thousand francs revenues, and this important and enviable post in which he had

so long and so illustriously served France. He knew this, and prepared himself peaceably and without hesitation for the sacrifice.

“At seventy-six years of age,” he wrote, “one ought to fear—not poverty, but not to fulfil exactly one’s duties.”

In the beginning of the year 1791 the old man was summoned to take the oath. On the 22nd of February he replied to the French Government :

Conscience and honour do not permit me to sign the oath which would oblige me to defend a new Constitution contrary to the ancient discipline of the Church.

By return of courier the National Assembly recalled the Ambassador of France from Rome. He died soon after, in his eighty-second year, a Confessor of the Faith, in exile and poverty. In resting her confidence in Bernis the Carmelite Princess was not deceived.

We find also in the parlour the young natural brother of Madame Louise, the Abbé de Bourbon, whom the Carmelite tenderly loved. He was the only illegitimate child whom Louis XV. acknowledged, and his civil state had been decided by this note of hand from the King:

The Curé of Chaillot, when he is baptizing the child of Mdle. de Roman will give him the following names: Louis N. de Bourbon.

Very well educated by his excellent tutor, the Abbé Turlot, his character earned the affection of the Royal family. This eulogium on the young Abbé de Bourbon is attributed to his nephew, the Comte de Provence (afterwards Louis XVIII.):

He was a man of good countenance, gentle, witty, affable, with pure morals; we loved him as one of the family and we sincerely regret him.

Louis XVI. thought of raising his young uncle's position in the Church, reserving for him the Cardinal's hat, the Abbey of St. Germain des Prés, and the Bishopric of Bayeux. Before sending him to complete his theological studies at Rome, where the warm solicitude of the Cardinal Ambassador awaited him, he directed this pseudo-brother to the recluse of St. Denis, judging that she was essentially competent to give a final opinion on the subject of his ecclesiastical vocation.

The Abbé de Bourbon was charming, pious, and well-intentioned, but weak and superficial. His early death in Rome cut off any chance he might have had of distinguishing himself.

Père de Clorivière, one of the Jesuits secularised by the proscription, often came to St. Denis, and there found the welcome his high virtues merited. On 2nd February 1778 he brought Madame Louise a gift, the most agreeable that could have been offered to the Royal recluse: a study of St. Theresa written by himself. This work was an *Introduction to the History of the Reformed Carmelites of St. Theresa in France*.

Father de Clorivière was, during the Revolution, the heart and soul of an association of priests who under various disguises and at the risk of their lives rendered signal services. He was afterwards imprisoned by Napoleon in the Tower of the Temple, and occupied the room of the unhappy Louis XVI. until the day when the prison was destroyed. At

the age of eighty years he had the honour of reinstating the Society of Jesus in France. Their first house was one in the Rue des Postes, generously offered by its proprietors, the Nuns of the Visitation. This very house has in our day become a great preparatory school, illustrious through the success of its pupils, and still more so through the martyrdom of its masters, hostages of the Commune.

The Abbé Soldini, Confessor of Louis XVI., kept up the most affectionate intercourse with the Princess. This ancient Trappist, first called to Versailles, through the recommendation of the house of Rohan, as Almoner of the "grand commun," that is to say, of the services of the Royal house, was the only priest present at the Palace at the time of the attempted assassination of Louis XV. by Damiens in 1757. He assisted the wounded King, and his conduct on the occasion gained him the appreciation of the Royal family, but he obstinately refused all the favours and benefices offered him. The Dauphine (*née* Princess of Saxony), who was the mother of Louis XVI., honoured him with the most intimate confidence and left him her rosary when she died. Madame Louise felt for him as much affection as did her sister-in-law; we even find her interesting herself warmly in the health of this excellent man.

"The great business I have to treat of with you," she wrote, "is on the subject of Lent, that I don't doubt you wish to make. But at least why don't you use milk for all nourishment; that would satisfy your desire of mortifying yourself, and would be very good for your chest, of which in honour and conscience you ought to take care. By this means you would not break the fast and you would not expose yourself to hæmorrhage. I hope that you will grant my request, it not being against your conscience, and that you will

never doubt the sentiments of esteem and confidence in which I hold you, Monsieur l'Abbé."

Those who are faithful to the memory of Madame Louise owe a special debt of gratitude to the Abbé Soldini. It was he who gave the Abbé Proyart, the first historian of the Princess, all the documents useful in writing her Life.

Other assiduous visitors at the grating of Carmel were M. des Portes, Bishop of Glandèves, in the comté of Nice; M. Rigaud, Vicar-General of Tours; the Abbé d'Alerey, Vicar-General of Uzès; the Abbé de Floirac, Vicar-General of Paris; the Abbé de Bourdonnaye; and the Abbé le Juge de Brassac, who were successively apostolic visitors at the French Carmel; then the Abbé de Saint Sulpice, and, lastly, the Abbé Proyart, who, by the desire of Madame Louise, wrote Lives of Marie Leczinska, of the Dauphin, and of King Stanislaus; and afterwards, when in exile during the Revolution, the Life of Madame Louise herself.

Finally, the Aldermen of St. Denis, the Chapter of the Collegiate, and the Benedictines of the Abbey came on certain occasions to salute at the grating the Royal inhabitant of their town.

But other visitors—privileged ones—Princes and Princesses of the Blood Royal, did not content themselves with the parlour, but penetrated into the enclosure according to their traditional right.

After the King, whom we have so often seen at St. Denis, the most tenderly received within the enclosure were the Carmelite's three sisters, Adelaide, Sophie, and Victoire. A tender friendship had always

united the Princesses. At Versailles Madame Louise wrote in her meditations :

The virtuous examples of my dear sisters who are so worthy of all my affection seem to make the yoke of my Lord still sweeter. Had my fate decreed that I should have been born far from them, I would have wished to leap the interval of rank and wealth that I might admire them closer. My ambition would have been to model my soul upon theirs ; in my constant, ardent, and eager prayers I would have forgotten my own needs only to present to Heaven their desires ; my life would have been offered a thousand times to the Eternal to add length to their days.

This sisterly affection was often tried. One sister, Madame Henriette, died young. Madame Louise was much afflicted.

“ I had in Henriette a beautiful model,” she wrote. “ She lived like a saint, every one said so ; and all we saw said so too. When she was forced to go to entertainments, she prayed to God there. Her death made the greatest impression on me.”

The surviving sisters often took the road to St. Denis ; they had cruelly felt the bitterness of the parting with Madame Louise.

“ At this news,” writes Madame Campan, “ Madame Adelaide flew into a violent passion. She addressed very severe reproaches to the King.”

She wrote to the recluse on the very first day :

11th April 1770.

You may better imagine yourself than I can express to you what has passed and is passing in my heart. My pain equals my astonishment ; but you are happy, that is enough for me. Pray to God for me, dear Heart ; you know my wants—they are more pressing to-day than ever. I shall certainly go to see you as soon as I can, as soon as I have the strength, and as soon as you wish to receive me without inconveniencing yourself. Adieu, dear Heart. I am going to

Tenebrae, where I fear I shall be a little distracted. Love me always and believe that I wish you well.

Madame Sophie made use of the same courier :

11th April 1770.

If I never spoke to you again of your project of being a religious, it was because I believed it to be a castle in the air, and that you would never affect it. I forgive you with all my heart for not having told me anything. Your sacrifice is beautiful because it is voluntary ; but do you believe that the involuntary sacrifice I have been compelled to make, is less hard to bear ?

Well ! it is the will of God ! Be quite sure, dear Heart, that I love you, that I shall love you all my life, and that I shall go eagerly to see you when you allow it. I embrace you with all my heart.

Madame Victoire was most affected.

“She lost,” writes Madame Campan, “the society of the sister she liked best. She contented herself with weeping silently over her loss.”

She wrote to the Prioress with a maternal solicitude :

11th April 1770.

I beg you, Madame, to write to me and give me exact news of Louise. I love her to excess, I confess ; judge of the state I am in about our separation. I can only submit to it for God’s sake, saying : “Thy will be done.” *Fiat voluntas Tua*. I am obliged in conscience to warn you that Louise is very feeble, of a delicate constitution, and that she has a weak chest and is subject to hæmorrhage. I do not doubt you will take care of her. I warn you that she will be impatient, but remember you are her Superior. . . .

And another time :

I am miserable, I confess, but submitted to the will of God, which seems to me well marked on this occasion. I have a very great favour to beg of you. It is to give me news of Louise, and

very often, especially in the beginning, when her zeal will be greater than her strength, she being naturally delicate and having a weak chest. In short, Madame, have pity on me, and enter into the smallest details of her health, and on this point hide nothing from me. I ask this of you for God's sake and a little for my unworthy self.

The Princesses often, when visiting the recluse, wanted to serve ~~the~~ religious humbly in the refectory. In proof of their interest in the monastery, Madame Adelaide, the eldest, gave her name to the first novice who followed Madame Louise to Carmel.

I have spoken of the heroic devotion of the daughters of Louis XV. when their father died of small-pox. The dying King communicated his disease to his admirable nurses. They were all struck down with the terrible sickness at Choisy four days after the King's death, and Madame Louise believed her sisters lost. She wrote tenderly and courageously on this subject :

I believe that there is no situation like mine: to lose one's father, and then to see one's three sisters struck down by the same malady! But when one has afflictions, one must raise oneself to the Hand that sends them, and adore it in silence. This is the duty of a Christian, and still more of a religious, who has promised to follow not only the precepts but the counsels of the Gospel, and that till death.

I fear the issue of this disease, but my fear is tranquil, and I find my consolation in God's presence, in the thought that if they succumb they will be martyrs of that filial piety they have practised in such an edifying manner. A little sooner, or a little later, we must all come to this end. *Fiat voluntas.*

The Empress Maria Theresa, in a letter to her daughter Marie Antoinette, thus shows her admiration of these Princesses :

"The restoration to health of your three aunts," she wrote,

“interests the universe, after their beautiful action of remaining with their father, thus exposing themselves and being thoroughly infected.”

The Princesses recovered : Madame de Genlis, though not very devoted to them, could not help seeing something extraordinary in this recovery. She wrote :

It is a truly miraculous thing that mesdames at their age, in spite of their ill-health and their deep and lively sorrow, in spite of their long watchings which must have inflamed their blood—having remained night and day at the bedside of their father until his last breath—and all three struck down with this horrible malady—were not more ill than if they had been successfully inoculated. All the doctors say it is a miracle. Such filial piety well deserves it.

The Princesses after their recovery returned to St. Denis. But a short time afterwards, in 1782, one of them, Madame Sophie, was called to God. The Carmelite wrote thus about this sister :

I confess that Sophie's state has rather troubled me, but without shaking my firm resolution always to acquiesce in the will of God. I am far from hoping for Sophie. It is a very difficult situation for me ; but if God wills it, I must wish it too. My sisters are heroic with her. Adelaide broke everything to her, and sustained her in her submission to God's will and in confidence in our holy mother. That will be very meritorious for her. . . .

And on 3rd March 1782 she wrote :

The death of Sophie, though it pierces my heart, fills me with consolation by the manner in which she has made the sacrifice of her life. It is said, and with good reason, “Like life, Like death.” It would be difficult to give you details of her life ; its great virtue was its simplicity, and its principal study to hide what it was worth. All I can say is that I should wish to have no more to reproach myself with than she had. I have never seen a purer soul.

Madame Sophie wrote in her will :

As I cannot leave anything to my Carmelite sister Louise, I beg her not to forget me, and to say three Ave Marias every day for my intention, and three De Profundis for the repose of my soul.

Two dear sisters remained to the Carmelite, Madame Adelaide and Madame Victoire. They survived her. Of these two, Madame Campan, their reader, preferred the younger.

“ Madame Victoire,” she wrote, “ was beautiful and very gracious ; her welcome, her glance, her smile were perfectly in keeping with the kindness of her soul. Intelligent, without perhaps having as much wit as Madame Adelaide, she loved work. Charitable, she gave everything she had to the poor. Also, thanks to her many good qualities, she was particularly loved by all who approached her.”

In 1791 these Princesses had to go into exile by the prayer of Louis XVI. Their nephew, already almost a prisoner, foresaw that his relatives would one day be obliged to leave Paris. He thought, and with reason, that the secret escape of such a numerous family would meet with many obstacles by attracting great attention from the disaffected, and that it was therefore wiser to begin by sending away publicly those who were least threatened.

The departure of the Princesses was assisted by Alexandre Berthier, Colonel of the Staff, commanding the National Guard at Versailles. This officer became, under the Empire, Prince of Neufchâtel.

But the National Assembly was not pleased about this journey. Menou spoke disdainfully of the Parliamentary debate raised on the subject. “ In truth,” said he, “ Europe will be astonished when it is known that the National Assembly has passed four whole

hours deliberating about the departure of two ladies who would rather hear Mass in Rome than in Paris." And Mirabeau made it clear that no law of the kingdom opposed the free movements of the Princesses.

Driven about by the Revolution from Rome to Caserte and to Trieste, these poor ladies ended their lives far from France—one in 1799 and the other in 1800.

Next to her sisters, the Carmelite dearly loved her brother the late Dauphine's five children. These were the new Dauphine, afterwards Louis XVI., the Comte de Provence, the Comte d'Artois, Madame Elizabeth, and Madame Clotilde.

The Comte de Provence, afterwards Louis XVIII., and the Comte d'Artois, who was afterwards Charles X., were then very young. Yet they wrote to their aunt as soon as they knew she was at Carmel.

The elder wrote thus :

VERSAILLES, 16th April 1770.

MY DEAR AUNT—I have been so filled with a most lively sorrow at losing you, and seeing you leave the world to consecrate yourself to God, that I have been edified and filled with admiration at the great spirit of piety, humility, detachment from the grandeur of this world, and courage which have made you take this resolution and carry it out. I only fear that you will not be able to support without inconvenience the rigours of the life you embrace.

I beg you to remember me in your prayers. I embrace you with all my heart, my dear aunt.

And the second :

VERSAILLES, 16th April 1770.

I am greatly afflicted at our separation, but at the same time I am filled with admiration of the great example you have given to the whole world.

I shall make my first communion to-morrow. You have God in your heart. Ask Him, my dear aunt, to deign to come for ever into mine.

I embrace you with all my heart, with an infinite tenderness, and with the greatest veneration.

These two Princes used to visit the cloister of St. Denis with a tutor. We may readily imagine what delight these visits gave the nuns. There is a portrait by Drouais of the little Comte d'Artois at this age, in which the graceful child is playing with a goat on which his little sister Madame Clotilde is riding. It is a very attractive and pretty picture.

Madame Clotilde, who was afterwards Queen of Sardinia, and whom the Church has pronounced venerable, was, even when quite little, attracted by her Aunt Louise. As for her elder sister, Madame Elizabeth, she wrote to Madame Louise the day after the latter's entrance into Carmel :

VERSAILLES, 12th April 1770.

MY DEAR AUNT—I cannot tell you how sad your retreat to St. Denis has made me. The thought that I shall only very rarely see you now, makes me shudder. Yet I hope that I shall be allowed to go sometimes to St. Denis; and that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you there. It will certainly be the greatest pleasure any one could give me.

The King has promised us the pleasure of supping with him in his small room next Tuesday. I assure you, dear aunt, it will not be so pleasant to me as if you were to be there. That will also be the day on which I shall make my first communion. I beg you, dear aunt, to ask God that I may make it worthily. For me, I shall fulfil your wish by praying for you, though I think you have no need of my prayers. I love you with all my heart, and kiss you, dear aunt. My sister asks me to tell you that she shares all my tender feelings for you.

Madame Elizabeth when twelve years old wanted

to give the white veil to Mdlle. Hesselin de Mergé, and the black veil to Mdlle. de Beaujeu, two of her aunt's dear pupils.

Madame Louise one day asked the child : " It will be you, little queen, will it not, who will give me the veil when I receive the habit ? "

" Oh no, aunt ! " cried Elizabeth.

" And why not ? "

" It will be the Dauphine. She has newly become one of the family, and will feel less than I should, the loss we all sustain. "

Marie Antoinette, of whom the child spoke, relates to her mother this incident of a visit to the convent (1772) : " Elizabeth wanted to assist at the office in the costume of a novice, but they could not find one to fit her, and she was disconsolate. "

Another time the little Princess Elizabeth put on an apron and served the nuns' dinner, subjecting herself to the usual penance when she was awkward, of kneeling down and kissing the ground.

One may conclude from this early taste for the exercises of the community that Madame Elizabeth hoped to follow her aunt's example and take the veil. But her brother, Louis XVI., would not have permitted it.

" I ask nothing better, " he said one day, " than that you should go to see your aunt, on condition that you do not imitate her. I shall need you, Elizabeth. "

The King foretold truly. Every one knows what an angel of consolation Madame Elizabeth showed herself when evil times fell on her loved ones.

" There was nothing narrow or sad in her piety, " writes M. de Nolhac, a competent judge, well versed in all that concerned the

ladies of Versailles. "It did not prevent her spending whole mornings on horseback, or being passionately fond of billiards, or even occasionally indulging in slightly sharp repartee. Her mortifications had no effect on her good-humour. She put a certain charming heartiness into everything, and above all into the relief of suffering. She was never annoyed with any one for not thinking as she did. This absolutely good soul believed in goodness in all other souls."

But more often still than his brothers and sisters, Louis XVI. himself with his Queen, Marie Antoinette, came to see his aunt in Carmel. It will not be out of place here to show how cordial were their relations. For certain writers, such as MM. Michelet, Cuvillier, Fleury, Todièrè, and Barthélemy, have been much mistaken about Madame Louise and her sisters, through believing thoroughly untrustworthy evidence. They have taken as their authorities the Abbé Soulavie, a priest who took the civil oath, was then suspended, and finally married; and the Abbé Beaudeau, an unfrocked monk from the monastery of Chancelade, near Périgueux, who died a lunatic. Both these men, in their *Mémoires et Chroniques Secrètes*, set themselves to ridicule and calumniate the Mesdames of France, and to represent them as enemies of the young Royal couple.

The abominable stories of these annalists should have discredited their testimony in the eyes of posterity. Soulavie, especially, imputed to Marie Antoinette unspeakable wickedness. As for Beaudeau, he ceaselessly showed his hatred of the Princesses—hate which caused him to admit chimeras without even a semblance of truth.

"So much the better for the State," he wrote, "if it is freed from the presence of the old aunts, and if it is true that the Castle of Commercy is being prepared for them. Madame will have the title of Governor of Lorraine, and her two sisters will follow her.

A real present to give the State would be to procure also the departure of the Carmelite."

Mirabeau, a contemporary, not without reproach himself, yet assuredly never erring through want of clear-sightedness, speaks of Soulavie in this wise: "He is accustomed to build his books with *mémoires* and documents gathered through all sorts of means. These he falsifies by suppressing parts and adding others. These manœuvres are visible on every page."

And Madame Campan, although she also was somewhat guilty of uncharitableness, indignantly accuses the Abbé Soulavie of odious libels. "What punishment," she cries, "ought to be inflicted on those libellers who dare to give their perfidious lies the character of historic *mémoires*."

It is on the faith of these authorities that to the Carmelite, as well as to her sisters, an angry hostility to her nephew, and above all to her niece, Marie Antoinette, has been attributed. Thus an affection which, as we shall see, was really warm and lasting, has been belied.

Frivolous gossips have made use of the secret correspondence of Mercy-Argenteau with his imperial mistress, Maria Theresa, as a weapon against the daughters of Louis XV. Yet the Empress wrote to her daughter:

Be fond of your aunts. These Princesses are full of virtue and talent. I hope you will earn their friendship. [4th May 1770.]

But in spite of this, Mercy-Argenteau shows small indulgence to the Princesses. He is not like Soulavie or Beaudeau. His noble conduct during the misfortunes of Louis XVI., and his efforts to snatch the King and Queen from the jaws of the

Revolutionary jackal, recommend him to all our sympathies, but these are certainly lessened when we learn that he dared to repeat most disgraceful and unfounded reports about Madame Adelaide and Madame Victoire, and took little trouble to cast doubt upon them. Such an act would compromise any man's reputation.

Even Madame Campan is sometimes to be suspected, because she listened too readily to the idle tattle of the Court. She has, however, her moments of sincerity :

"The Queen's daughters," she wrote, "were worthy of her. If some vile beings tried to shoot arrows of calumny against them, they fell immediately, repulsed by the universal knowledge of the elevation of their feelings and the purity of their conduct."

But sometimes she also uttered thoughtless and imprudent words, and they have been harmful.

Thus she would have us believe that the Princesses remained imbued with the old national spirit of hatred to Austria ; that they still shuddered at the thought of the recent battles of Fontenoy, Raucoux, Dettingen, and Plaisance, in some of which France and in others the Empire was victorious ; that they had not forgotten the terrible fever which their father, then known as "Louis the Well-Beloved," had contracted at Metz, during a campaign against the house of Austria ; and that on all these grounds they openly showed their objection to the marriage of the Dauphin, which would place an Austrian on their father's throne. She even says that the Princesses then invented the nickname of "The Austrian," by which the martyr Queen was spoken of amongst the people twenty years later. She gives no authority for this statement. In any case,

admitting Madame Campan's assertion that Madame Adelaide and her sisters had criticised the choice of an Austrian Archduchess for the Dauphin's bride, it is certain that their opinion greatly altered when Marie Antoinette arrived in France. There are documents which demonstrate the existence of a frank and intimate union between the new French-woman and her patriotic aunts. This close friendship is, indeed, the reason of all the Austrian Ambassador's spleen against the Princesses of France.

Though Mercy-Argenteau plainly shows his animus against the Royal aunts, we should notice particularly that it is not, as some have said, because he thinks them hostile to Marie Antoinette. On the contrary, it is because he sees them in such close accord with the new Dauphine, against their common, all-powerful enemy at Court, the favourite of Louis XV.

Mercy-Argenteau, without a blush, suggests to Marie Antoinette a most complaisant attitude towards Madame du Barry—"that creature," as Marie Antoinette calls her in a letter to her mother.

What really separated these two was the abyss between a pure-minded girl and the avowed mistress of her grandfather. This natural antipathy was apparent from the very first. Madame Campan mentions it in her *Mémoires*.

✓ Louis XV. went to receive her [Marie Antoinette] at the *muette* [hunting-lodge]. This Prince, blinded by a feeling unworthy of a King and the father of a family, caused the young Princess, the Royal family, and the ladies of the Court to sup with Madame du Barry. The Dauphine was much hurt by this, and spoke freely enough about it to her own people.

Maria Theresa's cynical Ambassador finds some-

thing sad, something greatly to be regretted, in the irreducible opposition of the Dauphine and the Princesses.

“Your Majesty,” he writes, “I must confess that the society most pleasing to the Dauphine is that of her aunts; but it would be possible and desirable for Madame the Dauphine to love the Princesses without blindly following all their example and counsels.”

When he complains of tutelage, of bondage, and of despotic jealousy, we must understand that the league of the Royal ladies against the favourite ran counter to his politics and instructions, and this was the sole motive of his spleen.

“The Countess du Barry,” he wrote, “spoke to me of her extreme desire that Madame the Dauphine should not look upon her with aversion, knowing that the severity of Her Royal Highness was the effect of the instructions of her aunts. The King told her that if he were to order the Princesses to treat the favourite better, he believed they would obey him, though with a bad grace; that he attributed their dislike of the Countess du Barry to devotional principles and to scruples.

The favourite believes that Her Royal Highness [Marie Antoinette] neither likes nor dislikes her; that the suggestion of the Princesses is the sole cause of the repulsion she shows; that if the Dauphine were not under the subjection of her aunts, and if she were allowed to act of her own free will, the favourite would have no cause to complain. I have tried to give to this belief an appearance of truth, and I draw from it the great advantage of making all the blame of the following scenes fall on the Princesses.”

These scenes are very quaint.

“I went to the Dauphine,” writes Mercy. “She was coming from Mass. ‘I have prayed hard,’ said she. I said, ‘O my God, if you wish me to speak, make me speak; I will do immediately whatever you deign to inspire me with.’ The Countess du Barry came. Madame the Dauphine said, looking at the favourite, ‘that the weather was bad; that one could not go out all day.’ This

remark was not addressed directly to Madame du Barry, and whether in tone or countenance the reception was not of the best."

Marie Antoinette relates other encounters equally refreshing :

"Madame du Barry is the most foolish and impertinent creature imaginable," she wrote. "She played every evening with me at Marly. Twice I found her beside me ; but I never tried to enter into conversation with her."

Through her Ambassador Maria Theresa constantly sent her daughter such pious and beautiful counsels as the following—a rule of life that might have been signed by Madame Louise in St. Denis :

You will say your morning prayers on your knees, then do a little spiritual reading, were it only for a quarter of an hour. You will hear Holy Mass every day, and twice on Sundays. Go, if possible after dinner, and particularly on Sundays, to Vespers and Benediction. As much as you can, remain on your knees in Church. If your confessor approves, you will observe the exercises of Lent, as well as the great feast days, and especially feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

And yet the same Empress, or at least her faithful mouthpiece, Mercy-Argenteau, advises Marie Antoinette to be on good terms with the favourite of Louis XV. Every one will not think with Maria Theresa that the duty of respect and submission, due always and everywhere to the King, should descend so far as to flatter his vices, in order to win his august goodwill. But Marie Antoinette, as we shall see, paid little heed to this doubtful advice, and the French Princesses also would not give in.

It is only fair to state, in extenuation of Mercy-Argenteau, that in this emergency every one cast scruples aside. Prelates and great nobles caressed

the favourite's paroquet, stuffed her pet monkey with biscuits, and her Zamorian negro with burnt almonds. The Prince of Condé invited her to Chantilly. The Duke of Orleans allowed her to call him "my fat father." It has been said that the Pope's Legate and Grand Almoner used to present the slipper at the "Petit lever" of Madame de Pompadour. I do not guarantee the authenticity of the story . . . but it is a fact that Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon, on the very day when he received the Cardinal's hat from the King, went to the favourite to thank her for the great favour.

To ignore the example of these defaulters it needed the solid strength which the daughters of Louis XV. found in their piety, and which their niece, Marie Antoinette, drew from the proud nobility of her high character.

When the cause of his ill-humour had disappeared and the favourite had beat a forced retreat, even then Mercy-Argenteau did not give up his old bitterness against the Princesses; but he continued to prove that a sincere and discreet intimacy was maintained between Marie Antoinette and her aunts. These favourable references, or "good marks," will now be all that we shall pick out of his secret correspondence.

17th July 1775.

Mesdames of France are more than ever shut up within themselves.

19th October 1775.

The behaviour of the Princesses is very reserved and wise; they meddle with nothing, especially nothing concerning the Queen. For a very long time I have observed nothing in their conduct which has given me the least suspicion. . . .

16th July 1776.

Mesdames have entertained the King and Queen at supper. On

this occasion Mesdames singled out the Queen for most marked and special attentions.

Before the birth of the little Princess Royal he writes :

Mesdames seem to feel sincerely for the Queen in her present state, and they show their feelings in a very attentive and seemly manner. . . .

The Queen sees her aunts every morning ; she gives them marks of her friendship and esteem, and the Princesses are quite pleased.

18th November 1780.

The Princesses have dined from time to time at Marly ; the Queen treats them with attention and friendship. This good understanding has lasted a long time, and the Princesses conduct themselves in a manner calculated to make it last still longer.

We can see very plainly the intimacy between Marie Antoinette and her aunts by reading the former's letter to her mother in which she describes her daily life :

"After breakfast," she wrote, "I go to see my aunts. . . . I go with my aunts to Mass. . . . At half-past six I almost always go to see my aunts. . . . At nine my aunts come to supper with us."

If this direct evidence is not enough to attest to a perfect harmony, at least the facts reported by Madame Campan, an eye-witness, will persuade unbelieving ones and are incontestable :

The Queen desired to ensure the happiness of the Princesses, daughters of Louis XV. They were very greatly venerated. She helped, at this time, to make them assured of a revenue which would render their life agreeable. The King gave them the Castle of Bellevue and all produce from the estate. He also maintained their table, their equipages, and paid all the expenses of their houses, of which the number was augmented.

It is true that Madame Campan mentions a very palpable difference between the young Royal couple and the Princesses. The latter disagreed with the King and Queen on the subject of the public trial of the Cardinal de Rohan, who was reckoned guilty in the affair of the necklace. In company with many others, they would have preferred that the fault of the frivolous Prelate should have been hushed up by a just and immediate punishment. They did not wish this notorious scandal, in which the Queen's name had already been maliciously mingled, to be laid before Parliament, and so to feed the public animosity.

The project of the Princesses may have been the more reasonable. At any rate it is plain that the motive which actuated them was a care for the best interests of the dynasty, and by no means a desire to criticise the Royal resolution. This resolution, as we all know, had most grave consequences.

Nowhere, then, can we find justification for the accusations of hostility against the Princesses, above all for this last hateful one formulated by Beaudeau. He wrote :

The Queen is loaded with abuse. It is the Jesuitical cabal of the old aunts which starts all these reports. . . . It is the old aunts who are the movers . . . it is from them the satires emanate.

Why the Castle of Bellevue, the habitation of the Princesses, should have been represented as the home of the guilty party which by calumnies, satires, and pamphlets brought on the most unjust unpopularity of the Queen, and eventually led her to the scaffold, remains, and will always remain, a mystery.

Nothing can be found to justify the stupid story

according to which these ladies once went so far as to desire and to propose a separation between Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. But if nothing remains of the imputations unjustly directed against the daughters of Louis XV., we must especially erase from our minds the rôle that calumny has assigned to their sister the Carmelite, in the hateful plot so jealously hatched against the young King and his beautiful Queen.

To mingle the name of a holy nun, who was absorbed, as we shall see, in the duties of the religious state, with these Court intrigues is a grotesque absurdity on the face of it. And when we learn that Madame Elizabeth, the heroic and gentle Princess who shared the prison and the scaffold with her brother, Louis XVI., was supposed to have been associated with her Carmelite aunt in plots against this brother, the inconsistency is complete.

Yet reason and honesty refuse to believe that all this was nothing but pure calumny: we must ask what foundation there was for the belief, which was probably quite sincere, that some kind of bitterness existed between the nun and the Queen, her niece.

Having, with most persevering attention, studied the records of the intercourse of these Princesses with each other, we come to the conclusion that the wise, prudent, and affectionate advice really given by Madame Louise to the young Queen must have been more or less disguised in bitter words by the thoughtless or angry chatter of the Court.

Surely the tenderness, experience, and piety of this Carmelite aunt authorised her, in the discreet freedom of intimacy, to give advice which Marie Antoinette received more severely from Vienna, as

the correspondence of her mother, Maria Theresa, bears witness. If the aunt criticised gently the dissipations of her niece, or the careless disdain she showed for what was said to her, or the exaggerated size of her head-dress, or the threatening height of her aigrettes, the language of her mother was much more cutting.

These censors only saw excusable frivolity in the Queen ; it is scarcely necessary to repeat here that she never gave reason for graver reproaches. Infamous accusations never reach her ; and Lamartine, the only serious writer who allowed himself to soil her stainless reputation, wrote afterwards in repentance, criticising his *Histoire des Girondins*.

I was foolhardy and unlucky in my criticism of the private life of the young Queen. Nothing authorises an imputation on her, in her duties of wife, mother, or friend.

But, on the other hand, certain frivolous actions of Marie Antoinette have been blamed by wise men ; and Maria Theresa herself, well posted in events through her Ambassador, did not hesitate to find fault with her daughter. She began by blaming extravagance in dress. It was, in fact, the time when Léonard, the favourite hairdresser of the Queen, and Mademoiselle Bertin, and the Sieur Beaulard, erected gauze and plumes to a wonderful height on elegant heads. . . . The Duchesse de Lauzun was seen one day at the Marquise du Deffant's with a whole landscape on her head. There was a stormy sea, ducks, a hunter on the watch, a miller with his donkey, and his wife talking to a little Abbé.

The Queen herself wore a *pouf à l'inoculation*, comprising a rising sun, an olive-tree covered

with fruit, and a snake winding round a flowering shrub.

The Empress complained to her Ambassador.

“I hear news,” she wrote, “of the rather too far-fetched head-dress affected by my daughter. I am going to write to her on the subject, as I think such extraordinary adornments are below the rank of a great Princess, and only likely to be the absorbing interest of common women and girls.”

Writing directly to her daughter she said :

I really must speak to you about something which I have seen in many newspapers. It is, the way in which you adorn yourself. It has been said, that, from the roots, the hair is dressed thirty-six inches high, and with many plumes and ribbons that make it even higher ! You know that I have always been of opinion that one should follow the fashions in moderation but never go beyond them. A charming and pretty young Queen has no need of these follies.

But Maria Theresa had other things to criticise besides puffs and dresses. Her Ambassador informed her of further errors.

19th February 1777.

The Queen has not been able to resist going to five or six masked balls of the Opera. There she speaks to every one, and goes about followed by a lot of young men, many of them foreigners, particularly Englishmen, whom she singles out ; and all this with an appearance of familiarity to which the public will never accustom itself. The Queen is becoming used to an absolute forgetfulness of all outward dignity, and I cannot insist enough on the dangerous consequences which may result amidst so frivolous, so familiar a nation as is this one. . . .

1779.

The Queen intends to go often to the masked balls which are given during the winter in the theatre of the town of Versailles. But these balls are so badly conducted that it would be very desirable if the Queen could be disgusted with them.

As time advances, the reproaches of the vigilant

Ambassador become more urgent, more precise, and graver. He writes :

While contradicting the lies and exaggerations inseparable from public reports, a number of authentic facts remain, actions to which it would be desirable that the Queen had never stooped. It is a public complaint that the Queen makes and occasions considerable expense. The cry can only go on augmenting unless the Queen speedily adopts some principles of moderation on this point. . . .

The Queen loses at play; the old debts contracted for her diamonds are being but slowly paid; there are no more funds for charitable donations; and the worst of all is the bad example, the regret it causes the King, and the angering effect it has on the people.

Another foreign witness, the Comtesse de la Marck, relates with more severity what was happening at Versailles. She writes to the King of Sweden, Gustavus III. :

The Queen goes constantly to the Opera, to the Comedy, makes debts, and decks herself out in plumes and puffs.

Maria Theresa in her uneasiness wrote thus :

They say that the King left the Queen at the Opera ball and she remained there alone for two or three hours, entertaining herself indiscriminately with different masks, on whose arms she walked about. I wish I knew the truth of it. My daughter, unless she wishes to give herself up wholly to these public entertainments, should not appear there without every possible precaution. . . .

Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, I see with regret the perseverance of my daughter in her taste for a dissipated life, and I greatly fear the consequences which some day may entail much unpleasantness for her.

And writing to Marie Antoinette herself :

MY DEAR DAUGHTER—This continually dissipated life of outings and races, without the King, grieves me greatly. . . .

Ought I not to declare war against these continual dissipations,

which entail so many acts little suited to my dear queen? Your own balls are quite befitting, but those of the Opera are not so by any means.

If the mother expresses her anxiety in this forcible manner, surely the aunts, Madame Louise in her cloister and the Princesses at Court, had the right and duty to tenderly give analogous advice.

Although these Princesses, so gratuitously represented as kill-joys and shrews, could not but blame the exaggeration of some of the costumes of the time, they were certainly never heard to condemn the elegance and display suitable to Royal persons. The proof of this is easy. They themselves dealt with the same *costumière* as their niece. This artiste, Madame Eloffe, wrote stories which were published by the Comte de Reiset, a tasteful literary man. From these tales we learn that the Princesses who remained in the world wore very beautiful clothes, quite in accordance with their rank. In like manner the stories of the famous Duvaud, published by M. Courajod, show Mesdames as very enlightened judges of beautiful Chinese and Japanese vases.

Madame Eloffe furnished all their servants with special Bellevue liveries, and the Princesses themselves with taffetas shoes, "colinettes," "fichus à la caravane," cloaks, canary-coloured hats, dresses trimmed with silver peas or velvet flowers, ladders of chenille ribbon (*de couleur merde d'oie*), dark green Italian taffetas, ribbons, "des frivolités," English gauze chemises, valenciennne and maline lace, paniers,—in short all kinds of clothes in the fashion of the age.

And for these things the Carmelite did not blame either her sisters or the young Queen, but only for excess.

The Carmelite is indeed to be congratulated if she

really gave the serious advice which is attributed to her, and if it was the gentle influence of St. Denis which worked the manifest change that took place in a few years in the attitude of the young Queen. A reform was introduced quietly, and frivolity banished from Court; and Marie Antoinette, having learnt wisdom, wrote graciously to her mother :

My dear mama may be reassured about my conduct. If I was wrong of old it was through childishness and thoughtlessness; but now my head is much more settled, she may rely on it that I quite realise all my duties.

Having cleared away all calumnious suppositions, we must now hasten to demonstrate the real cordiality of the intercourse between the Carmelite and the young Royal couple.

While Louis XVI. was still Dauphin, he wrote to his aunt as soon as he knew she was at Carmel. Here is his letter :

VERSAILLES, 16th April 1770.

MY DEAR AUNT—I am in despair at our separation. I am filled with admiration of the courage you must have had to leave the world and give yourself wholly to God. If I did not fear to disturb you in your pious occupations, it would be a great pleasure to me to go to see you, and to show you the great affection and veneration I have and will always have for you, dear aunt. I beg you always to have the same friendly feeling for me, and to give me some intention in your good and holy prayers.

I embrace you with all my heart, dear aunt.

Marie Antoinette also wished to visit Madame Louise before her first entry into Paris. Received in Compiègne by her *fiancé*, the Dauphin, and her future grandfather, Louis XV., she arrived at St. Denis, 15th May 1770, the eve of her marriage. She threw herself into the arms of Madame Louise,

she visited the monastery, and when she left, to reach Paris through a delirious popular triumph in the Bois de Boulogne, she said to the Carmelite : " I feel that I have an infinite need of your prayers. I shall come soon again."

This first visit of Marie Antoinette to St. Denis is related by her foster-brother Weber, who followed her to the Court of France and only by a miracle escaped the Revolutionary scaffold. In his *Mémoires* he adds to the tale of the interview between the Dauphine and Madame Louise :

This homage rendered to virtue and real piety deserves the respect and eulogium of all good men for the Archduchess.

Marie Antoinette returned often to St. Denis, sometimes with her husband and sometimes alone. On the day of the clothing she offered the victim to God and gave her aunt the novice's veil. This created a special bond of reciprocal affection between the Princesses.

Here is an extract from a letter, dated 13th October, to the Empress Maria Theresa, which gives Marie Antoinette's impressions of the ceremony :

I went to the Carmelites of St. Denis to give the veil to my aunt, Madame Louise, who will be professed next year. The ceremony was imposing ; my aunt has the composure of a saint.

On the death of Louis XV. the first care of his successor, Louis XVI., was to send his condolences to the Carmelite, and to leave himself in her hands.

" Plunged as we are in sorrow," he wrote, " I could not write to you yesterday. I do not doubt but that God, who, my dear aunt, has led you to the convent, will sustain you in this sad event. I beg you, dear aunt, always to count on me. When you are able to

write I pray you send for me, that I may show you myself all my affection for you."

Very soon the new Queen visited her aunt :

The Queen in embracing the Carmelite held her a long time in her arms without being able to speak except by her tears. She wept so much that we were forced to cry too, and all who saw it.

"My aunt," she said, "when you want anything, address yourself to me. I shall tell the King, I shall implore him, and I shall succeed—I know it. He loves you and will do anything to please you. When you feel strong enough to receive him, tell me and I shall bring him to you."

Soon afterwards Louis XVI. came himself to read to his aunt her father's reparatory will, and when he was consecrated he brought the commemorative medal of his coronation.

He came into the enclosure without ceremony, like his grandfather. If the community were in choir he would go there, and, sitting in a stall near his aunt, would chant the office with the nuns—only he chanted loud and false. His aunt made merry on this subject, asking her companions in his presence : "What do you say to my nephew's voice ?"

"We say," answered a prudent sister, "that the King edifies us greatly."

When the Queen became a mother after ten years of wedded life, she attributed this happiness to the prayers of Madame Louise. The latter had constantly asked this gift from God through the intercession of a foreign saint, to whom Marie Leczinska had specially dedicated her family—Jean Népomucène, patron of Bohemia. The good Queen had even instituted a special decoration for her ladies in honour of this saint. The Marquise de Créquy was thus honoured, and also Madame de Saint-Florentin.

Louis XVI. came with ceremony to make his joy known to the Carmelite, saying to her in proper terms : " My aunt, I come to do homage to you for an event in which I and my people rejoice to-day, for I attribute it to your prayers."

As for Marie Antoinette, we see her encourage very early in her daughter, Madame Royale, a deep affection for her great aunt. She often brought the child to St. Denis, and gave her a doll, dressed by Madame Campan in a Carmelite habit. The mother wished this religious remembrance to accompany another doll, dressed in full Court costume by Madame Eloffe.

It is said—and it is not to be wondered at—that a visit to St. Denis inspired the dignified and firm refusal which, in spite of many entreaties, the King and Queen opposed to Voltaire when he dared to demand audience of them on his return to Paris (1778).

At the same time, it may be true, as Lafont d'Aussonne relates, that Marie Antoinette, being touched with pity by a humble supplication of the old schemer for permission to die on his native soil, obtained from the King leave for the exile to return to France.

Even during the reign of Louis XV. Voltaire had petitioned for a pardon ; but those in high places were not well disposed towards the poor calumniated innocent.

1768.

I do not know what means they have used to calumniate me with "*the man*," and to do me an ill turn with "*the woman*"; but means are not wanting to evil-doers: everything is good to them provided it hurts; they can poison everything.

Louis XV. had likewise turned a deaf ear when

the great railer had begged, through the Duke of Châtelet, for the collar of St. Michael and the cross of St. Lazare.

All the villainy of Voltaire had miscarried even with Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry. Having scourged the latter in the pamphlet *Bedlam Broken Loose*, he wrote to her in a transport of passion that his deep respect had much difficulty in repressing. He did not succeed for all his pains ; but he persevered, and dared to call the favourite "Your Divinity," as one should say "Your Highness."

The strictures of the great slanderer having had no effect on Louis XV. and "La Dame," Voltaire thought he could more easily impose on Marie Antoinette. He wrote to Argental (18th October 1776) :

I imagine one could easily obtain the protection of this divine Antoinette against the wickedness of certain pedants in black robes.

Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were, indeed, merciful to the exile ; but at least their charity was not followed by weakness. Voltaire, though back in his own country, did not come to Versailles. Mercy-Argenteau writes about this to his Sovereign :

20th March 1778.

CONSECRATED MAJESTY—The arrival of the poet Voltaire has been the signal here for most extravagant manifestations of homage towards this dangerous wit. They think he should have been called to Versailles and there given a distinguished reception. The Queen has been earnestly petitioned to this effect. But Her Majesty has refused very firmly, and has declared that she wishes to have nothing to do with a man whose teaching has caused so much trouble and inconvenience.

Madame Campan relates that the Queen even

showed the lively regret with which a leniency of this kind had been extracted from her in former years.

“It is strange,” said the Queen, “that the Maréchale de Mouchy should, after the intrigues of the sect, have presented to me some years ago Madame Géofrin, the foster-mother of the philosophers.”

The Carmelite was not the only person severe towards Voltaire. He himself evidences this in his great anger: “That old Jesuit monster, Père Beau-regard,” he says, “preached before the Royal family, and thundered against the glory with which they have attempted to cover ‘the audacious chief of an impious sect, the destroyer of religion, the perverter of public opinion and good morals.’ These are the very words he used, and the King had no mind to disapprove of this evangelical diatribe.”

Marie Antoinette often came to consult with her aunt about her charities, or the dowry she wished to give to some young girl whom poverty prevented entering religion.

The Queen, in spite of the hostile reports of Mercy-Argenteau, impressed her mother so favourably by what she said in her letters of Madame Louise, that the Empress sent her portrait to St. Denis with this inscription :

When at the foot of the altar you taste the advantage of the peace your virtues make you prefer to the noisy magnificence of a Court, look at this portrait: it asks you in my name for a tender remembrance of my daughter and of me.

A peculiarity about this picture is that in it Maria Theresa caused herself to be portrayed in a Carmelite habit.

Madame Louise replied to the Empress :

I am filled with the liveliest gratitude for the gift Your Majesty has made me. Looking at it, I feel strengthened for the virtues of my state by the remembrance of all those Your Majesty practises on the throne. I can only offer before your image my prayers for your prosperity, for your Imperial and Royal family, and particularly for the Dauphine, my very dear niece.

Finally, we see the King's privy purse providing very liberally for the construction of the Chapel built by Madame Louise at St. Denis.

These things could never have happened had the Queen and the Carmelite been enemies. It is useless to insist further.

The enumeration of the Royal visitors to the Carmel of St. Denis would be incomplete if after the French Princes we did not mention those foreign Royalties who, actuated by worldly curiosity, visited this King's daughter in what they considered her living incarceration.

This stream of Sovereigns was not pleasing to her: she thought that the duty of a King was to reign in his own country, and not to travel about according to the new fashion.

"Kings," she wrote, "have never been seen travelling so much as in this century. That should not be good for their States. But it is their own business."

In 1777 the German Emperor, Joseph II., came to France under the name of Count Falkenstein, to visit his sister, Marie Antoinette. He mercilessly found fault with many things, and he wished to penetrate into the humble retreat of Carmel.

"My sisters," wrote Madame Louise, "have informed me that the Queen ought to ask permission from me for her brother to come and see me.

I answered Adelaide, that according to our rules the sons and grandsons of Kings of France may enter the house of the Carmelites ; so that, as the King will give him, I think, the rank of his own son, he will have the right to enter the cloister."

The Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, Ambassador and official guide of the Emperor in France, describes to Maria Theresa the visit :

"His Majesty," he wrote, "went to St. Denis at 9 o'clock to see Madame Louise. The Emperor entered the interior of the convent, and four of his suite, of whom I was one, were also admitted. First they went over the whole cloister ; during this time the remarks were all about the details of the religious life of this house. Madame Louise remained alone with the Emperor afterwards, and had an interview of nearly three-quarters of an hour.

This fragment of their conversation is cited :

"Truly, Madame, I should rather be hanged than live here as you live."

"Monsieur Count, when we consider what our Saviour suffered for us, the life at Carmel appears very easy. It is true that our happiness is of the class that must be tasted to be believed in ; but as I have the double experience, I am in a position to say that the Carmelite in her cell is happier than the Princess in her palace."

The visit of Joseph II., who was soon so cruelly to strike the monasteries of his Empire, was not a very flattering attention in the eyes of the Carmelite ; for this free-thinking Prince had already been to salute Madame du Barry in her golden retreat of Louveciennes. On which circumstance the Empress Maria Theresa, having no longer to propitiate this woman, wrote from Schoenbrunn on 31st July :

I would have been quite satisfied if the Emperor had dispensed with going to see this despicable du Barry.

The Archduke Maximilian also came to visit the Carmelite whose hand had once been designed for him. If we may believe the philosophers—

This German, puffed up with pride, rigid, haggard, niggardly of words, would not open his mouth except to say foolish things.

With doubtful taste they nicknamed the Archduke, *Arch-beast*.

But the explanation of all this heat is that this Austrian showed himself reserved in the presence of the French beauties, who were rather surprised, says the chronicle, at such icy indifference. Also, and above all, he abstained from showing any attention to the great wits who were then in fashion. Such a crime was not forgiven.

Prince Henry, brother of the celebrated Frederic of Prussia, protector of Voltaire, when travelling in France under the name of Count d'Æls, did not neglect the opportunity of going to St. Denis in 1784. Madame Louise has not said that this personage impressed her favourably; one cannot please everybody. Prince Henry suited Voltaire, who speaks of him thus: "I esteem him more than all the Popes of Rome."

He had the good fortune also, no doubt for the same reasons, to please the Empress Catherine of Russia.

"His merits," wrote she, "correspond with his great reputation."

He was also greatly liked by Diderot. The latter, who was altogether a contemporary of Madame Louise, was one of those philosophers who have most obstinately slandered the monasteries. It would

almost be blasphemy to compare with his monstrous caricature of "La Religieuse" the pure image of Madame Louise.

If, speaking of Prince Henry of Prussia, I recall the infamous calumnies of Diderot, it is to mention that France owes to this Royal stranger the publicity of a posthumous work of Diderot's, *Jacques le Fataliste*. This distorted tangle of mischievous anecdotes had slept for more than ten years after the death of the author, during which time "chaste Germany" alone had regaled itself therein by the aid of translations. In 1795 Prince Henry offered to the newly created Institute of France the original manuscript of the work, which was printed the following year. Those who have read it will readily agree that the glory of France and her literary dignity would have lost nothing had the Prussian kept his present to himself.

During the summer of 1786, the Archduchess Marie Christine, an elder sister of Joseph II. and Marie Antoinette, and Governor of the Low Countries for Austria, came to France with her husband, the Duke of Saxe-Teschen. She also went to call on Madame Louise. M. de Nolhac, guardian and restorer of Versailles, and interesting historian of the Royal family in the eighteenth century, though not always favourable to the Princesses, does not doubt in this case that the journey of the Archduchess to St. Denis "certainly took place by the advice of Marie Antoinette."

The Royal visitor who pleased Madame Louise best was Gustavus III., King of Sweden, the chivalrous friend of the House of France, who was soon to

perish by assassination. At that time he was travelling under the name of the Count de Hagà. The Princess received him with marked distinction. She herself gives an account of the interview in a letter to Cardinal de Bernis :

“ I told him,” she wrote, “ that I did not care for visits from the world ; but that for his, I desired it because I knew the feelings with which the late King had regarded him, and the intimacy that had always existed between Sweden and France. He seemed pleased.”

At the foot of a staircase, Gustavus III. offered his arm to the nun, and she accepted it with the most charming grace, saying : “ The rule of the Carmelites says nothing about the case of a King presenting his arm, and our families have long been used to giving it.”



Noto desti, Photo.

THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES.

CHAPTER VI

A CARMELITE'S CELL

To reach her cell from the choir, Madame Louise had to mount a rough staircase which before her arrival had had no balustrade. She was obliged to ask for one.

I am accustomed to go up and down only very easy staircases, so if there are no banisters on those I must use at St. Denis, I beg you to put ropes on them, because I get so giddy.

But even the new rail did not give her much assurance. Let Madame de Genlis speak on this subject :

I wished to know what she found hardest to accustom herself to in her new condition.

"You will never guess," she replied, smiling. "It is having to come down a little staircase alone. At first it seemed to me a frightful abyss. I had to sit on the top step, and, in this posture, drag myself down step by step."

Indeed it was no wonder that a Princess who had only descended the grand marble staircase of Versailles, surrounded by pages and leaning on the arm of her chevalier of honour, should tremble on finding herself, with no prospect of assistance, at the top of a small steep staircase. She had known for a long time in advance of all the austerities of the religious

life. Most of them she had practised for two years in Versailles, but steep stairs had never entered her thoughts. But if the ascent was hard the Princess found a delightful palace above.

"The cell," she wrote, "is a Paradise, where the Carmelite always finds her Divine Spouse ready to listen to, and answer her, where the Blessed Virgin and all the saints await her homage and offer her their protection."

Mdlle. de MacMahon was much edified by the Princess's love for her cell. She tells us :

I see her constantly kissing the poor furniture of which she has the use, with an affection which delights me, and makes me see how great her vocation is, and that it is a pure effect of God's grace.

Madame Louise never entered her cell without blessing herself with holy water and thanking God for having given her this refuge. She had agitated for and obtained a cell exactly like those of the other nuns. "The lodging I need is a cell the same in every particular as that of every other nun."

Let us see what a Carmelite cell is like. A straw-seated chair, a little bench of white wood, used as a table for devotional books, a holy water font, a cross, three paper pictures, a candlestick, an earthenware pitcher, a heather broom, a sand-glass to measure the time, and a pallet, and the cell is furnished.

At about eleven o'clock the nuns composed themselves to sleep on a straw palliass, stretched on three planks, supported on trestles. Their only covering was one of coarse, rough serge; no curtains or valance such as were then in use on the beds of the poorest peasants. The bare walls Madame Louise used laughingly to call "a Carmelite's curtains." Often in her uneasy slumbers, when she was not well, her head would knock sharply against the wall. Sometimes this rough pallet was used as a Royal throne. When the

King came to see his daughter they put a comfortable arm-chair in the cell for him, but he did not use it, preferring to sit on the bed. He must have found his seat a hard one. This uncomfortable bed gave much anxiety to the Carmelite's sisters, but she thus earnestly reassured them :

You are troubled about my bed? But I am not to be pitied. I like it very well. I assure you I am not deserving of pity when we think of the bed on which our Saviour lay for us. I say it to my shame that though every one is edified by it, it costs me nothing. I am as much at my ease there as in a feather bed. . . .

The nights in Versailles wearied me, those in St. Denis rest me. . . .

Here one sleeps better than in Versailles. At Versailles I had a good bed, but very often I could not sleep on it; here, on our pallet, I scarcely wake at the sound of the "matraque."

This "matraque" was sounded at five o'clock, and was an instrument like a very noisy rattle; at certain seasons of the year it took the place of the bell.

This delightful bed, which she praises so highly, was only used by Madame Louise at night. When taking the short siesta, prescribed by St. Theresa during summer, she lay on the bare floor, with her head on a rung of the chair.

The Princess's cell differed in only one point from the others. She chose it as the worst and most dismal; the window would not close properly, and each night the wind would blow out the candle. To prevent this the window had to be stuffed with paper, and whenever it was opened this had to be patiently done over again. The excess of heat and cold, each in their turns, made this cell the most unpleasant of all in the convent. The Princess never complained, still she could not help mentioning the fact. She wrote in winter :

I am freezing in winter. I sometimes think my fingers will drop off. Yet I am still favoured, for I have had no chilblains on my hands this winter. . . . I am quite revived. I was dying of cold. I never suffered so much as this winter, but now that is all over. . . . Do you think I would cry like a child about it? One must always have something to offer our Lord.

In summer the heat was so great that often in the morning she found her dress still wet from yesterday's perspiration.

I thought I should smother from the heat the last few days. My resource was to think that my sweat would help to put out the fires of Hell and those of Purgatory, which I deserve every moment by my cowardice in bearing this inconvenience.

A great privation in Carmel is that the nuns have no towels to dry themselves in their cells. The Carmelite must use the common towel hanging in the corridor, and often, when she reaches it, it is quite wet. Madame Louise found this custom very trying. She wrote :

I acknowledge that this mortification was one I had not counted in my calculations, and my delicacy at first was so great that I hurried to wash before the others, so that I should find the towel dry ; but when I had reflected that my haste could not please God, and was not in accord with my wish to take the vow of poverty, I took my turn, and used the towel with my eyes shut. I assure you these little sacrifices are not so unpleasant when they are done for God.

It will probably have been remarked that the cell contained no cupboard for personal linen. The Carmelite keeps none herself. Her coarse linen is changed at stated times. It is as rough as the bed-covering. At Versailles, to accustom herself to the wear of harsh linen, Madame Louise wished to procure a regular Carmelite chemise, and to do so

had recourse to an innocent subterfuge. The day after a reception in the Monastery of Compiègne she wrote to the Prioress, Mdlle. d'Havré :

I look on the tunic which the novice wears at this first sacrifice of herself as almost a relic. Be so good as to send me one of them. You can send it by your portress, well wrapped up and hidden in paper, with directions that the parcel is only to be given to me in person.

She had therefore had some experience, but still she felt the trial.

When I was changing my linen to wear serge for the rest of my life, nature murmured, though I had already made a trial in advance of this austerity. To silence it I asked leave to wear a hair-shirt for some time. I got permission, and from that time serge seemed to me as soft as silk.

Carmelites, instead of stockings, wear bandages of thick cloth, and on their feet cord-sandals like those worn by Spanish peasants, and, out of doors, thick wooden sandals. As for dresses, the Carmelite has only one at a time. During her seventeen years in the cloister Madame Louise had only three. The last she wore for eight years, and she always wore them till they were quite threadbare. Madame Louise laughingly remarked that the Carmelite dress was supposed to become her.

They say that since your servant wears the elegant Carmelite habit her hump shows but little. She laughs at this, for since she came to the use of reason nothing has seemed to her to hide it.

Since the one robe often required mending it was patched with pieces of new stuff or darned with different coloured threads, economically collected from the sweepings or the waste of other work.

While the robe was being mended, they attired themselves in anything they could find. This was a frequent cause of merriment for Madame Louise. One day, rolled up in a blanket, she wrote a letter to her sister Adelaïde.

In the cell, however poor it may be, there is at least the feeling of solitude and of being at home, which is very enjoyable. The severest penance of the Trappists is that they have no corner they can call their own. They must live together constantly, without cessation or exception, sleeping at night in the common dormitory, and occupied all day in sight of each other. The Carmelite has her own domain, her cell; there are hours when she can retire to be alone with her God. But this sweetness, which was even more a joy to her than to her companions, Madame Louise for some time gave up of her own free will. One of the nuns was so nervous that she could not sleep alone. Madame Louise offered her hospitality, saying brightly to her visitor: "You must keep your fears for winter. We should smother here in summer if there were two of us."

But it was not alone the austerities of the rule which Madame Louise practised. Her secret penances were continual, and when she could not hide it in her cell she went to the convent granary, and there freely disciplined herself.

It is not our province to penetrate secrets which are too high and unsearchable for us, but we may note, at least, with silent admiration, that the walls of the granary of St. Denis are crimsoned with the blood she drew with the discipline. On them are written, so to speak, the records of her mystic espousals to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VII

THE REFECTORY

AT table each Carmelite used a porringer, an earthenware cup, and a wooden spoon. Whoever broke or cracked one of these modest utensils accused herself of it on her knees before the nuns left the table.

One of the nuns, called the purveyor, looked after the necessary provisions, which were bought in the market by the portress, an uncloistered Sister. The cooking-stove was not allowed to be lit more than an hour before the next meal. This fact was learnt one day by Louis XV., when he went over the house about four o'clock, and asked, in astonishment, why there was no fire in the kitchen.

At the eleven o'clock dinner and at supper, a tray, or rather a wooden board, on which were laid the different portions, was brought into the refectory. The tray went the rounds, and each nun took a bowl. In the bowl there was, of course, nothing but abstinence fare—vegetables, rice, milk foods, and sometimes fish. Extras, though rare, were little appreciated by the Carmelites. One of them, Mdlle. de MacMahon, wrote ingenuously :

We have twice been regaled with fish *pâtés*, but our stomachs are not accustomed to such fare. We eat little of them for fear of being ill, and returned with pleasure to our eggs and vegetables.

As for breakfast, it was an infrequent meal. The fast commenced on the 14th of September and finished at Easter. Thus for two-thirds of the year nothing is taken till dinner. For the remaining third of the year there was permission to eat a crust of bread before dinner, which was taken from the leavings of the day before.

Such a régime would not appear to be very favourable for sick people. When Madame Louise came to the convent her health was so poor and weak that she would hardly have been received only that she *was* Madame Louise. She was weak, puny, often afflicted with hæmorrhage, and was difficult to please as regards food. Eggs, fish, and milk foods were especially distasteful to her. She was so much afraid that all this would be an obstacle to her entering religion that the Versailles papers contain a touching prayer on this subject :

I commend to Thee not only my heart, to form in it all the virtues and all the perfection of the rule, but my body also, that Thou mayest make it able to endure austerities. That in the midst of pain and infirmities my constitution may grow strong, so that, when by the mercy of God other obstacles are removed, my delicacy may be no hindrance to my vocation.

She resolutely attacked the poor menu, and allowed no one to see her aversion to the greater part of the food. She swallowed her egg without flinching, and it was only much later that they learnt how much the effort cost her, and tried to dispense her from it. "No, no," she answered ; "for seven years I have fought against this peculiarity of my taste, and I hope I have gained something. If I go back one step I am conquered."

The Superiors decided that she should be served

with fish every day because of her delicacy. She hid her repugnance to an exception, all the more distasteful because their fish, bought in the market at a low price, could not either by its taste or smell have been attractive to the greatest lover of fish. Her stomach revolted from pumpkin *pâtés*, and she thus tells us how she overcame it :

Here are the means I took to overcome myself. My dislike was partly to the sight of them, so I eat and never looked at them. The taste was not so horrible, and besides, what is not nice to taste is very good for the soul ; there is no doubt of that. . . . As for me, I am not quite happy save when fighting my dislikes. This opposition to nature is necessary in order to subdue the imagination, which runs away when left with a loose rein. She even chose spoiled eggs and decayed artichokes, and, after all, declares herself well pleased with her new diet.

I scruple finding so much pleasure in eating our own peas and carrots. No ! No Versailles cook ever knew how to season a dinner as work and fasting do here.

The brief the Pope sent her when she entered the Carmelites, dispensed her from all observances incompatible with her health. She respectfully declined to make use of this document.

To one of her companions she wrote :

In the name of God, my dear sister, do not consult so many directors and doctors. Our true Doctor, our true Model, is Jesus on the Cross, Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. He is as powerful now to cure both your soul and body as when He lived among men, to whom He said : " Your faith hath made you whole, go in peace."

If she occasionally accepted the relaxations imposed on her, it was by force, and for a short time :

They take care of me, and I consent to it, till I have made my vows. Then when I am a real Carmelite, and have nothing more

to fear from spies from Versailles, I shall be like you, and have no more alleviations.

Later, she protested against all exceptions :

They will perhaps tell you, Father, that I am ill, but it is not true . . . that you may forbid me to fast; but I am quite able for it.

She thought this daily succession of small sacrifices even more meritorious than the great sacrifice of entering religion :

The world canonises us as soon as we have ceased to be what we were and believes that we are what we ought to be. But God does not judge like men. A great sacrifice in tearing us from the world shows that we fear to be condemned with the world, the little daily sacrifices prove the wish to please our Divine Spouse.

What is very surprising is that such a life strengthened Madame Louise. She ceased to have hæmorrhage and began to look quite well. She astonished the King when he came to see her. He even sent M. Malouet, who had attended his daughter at Court, to see her at Carmel, and the doctor could not but notice the improvement in her health. This doctor was a brother of the Secretary of the Mesdames of France, the eloquent Malouet, one of the liberal but powerless upholders of constitutional monarchy.

After eight months' fast—and fasting to her was no sinecure, for she was often hungry—the advent of Easter found Madame Louise strong and fresh. This noticeable improvement in her health, despite her many privations, is attested by Madame de Genlis :

I cannot express the surprise I felt when I saw her. Madame Louise, who was so thin and pale, is much fatter; she has a fresh complexion and bright colour.

Madame Louise repeatedly spoke on the same point :

I am quite well ; to my shame Lent has fattened me, though I was very hungry. . . .

I am fatter than Victoire, they say, at present ; but I can't judge, having no mirror.

Then in a letter to her friend, M. de Bonal, Bishop of Clermont :

I lived thirty-two years when I could not endure a quite luxurious fast, and here for thirteen years I have fasted on worse fare than most poor people, and, thanks to God, am about to commence my thirteenth Lent, without eggs, butter, or milk foods.

All the same, it appears that the poor fare of Carmel, though so favourable to general health, neither cured nor prevented gout. Madame Louise wrote to the Cardinal de Bernis :

Yes, gout often takes possession of Carmelites, for the extremely hard life we lead acts on our poor bodies in the same way as good living does on worldly folk.

Such hard personal abstinence surely authorised Madame Louise to ask that far less strict observances should be maintained as regards the keeping of Lent by the faithful. When the Bishop of Clermont was asked to lessen in his diocese the customary austerities, she wrote to him :

Allow your spiritual daughter to infuse into your paternal heart some of the bitterness with which hers is filled on account of the demand that has been made to you. I am daring, and perhaps even impertinent, but you will pardon it to my zeal, when I see the state to which the Church's observances are nowadays reduced. Who will profit by these indulgences ? Is it those unfortunates who have only bread to eat ? No. Those who eat vegetables all the year round and grow thin in their grinding poverty ? No.

Will it be those who only need their priest's permission to eat meat ?
No. But it will be the rich who may dine sumptuously on fish and other abstinence fare, and who now wish to have their tables groaning with meat as well.

This love of the regular observances remained the Princess's to the end. She died on the night of the 22nd of December. On the 20th she had written to her sister Madame Victoire :

I am not badly off considering my state. They have forbidden me to fast, but I can quite accomplish the abstinence.

CHAPTER VIII

RECREATION

THE guiding spirit of Carmel is simplicity, singleness of heart. When one meets a Carmelite one is surprised to find the recluse smiling and gay, free and open of soul, without gloomy murmurings or dryness of spirit.

And such was Madame Louise at St. Denis. Certainly she was not there for her own pleasure. "Have we then come here to seek amusement?" she said on one occasion. But she knew that one must sometimes unbend, that there must be an hour for recreation, and she was very merry when the rule allowed it. Her kind, pliable, happy disposition can be seen from her meditations at Versailles.

Above all I shall never permit myself to cultivate a sombre, forbidding kind of piety, which would not give way to circumstances or persons, when there is no question of the glory of God or of one's salvation.

At Carmel, St. Theresa allowed two kinds of recreation: the daily one, which is passed in general conversation, and one admitting of private intercourse between two of her daughters, and so of greater freedom; the latter is rarer and is called "licence." The Princess used both, when permitted, and entered heartily into each. To one of her sisters she wrote:

Everything here breathes of heavenly joy. I have just come from recreation, where I thought I should die of laughing.

And later on :

Here is all the joy of a good conscience. I am so happy in this holy house that the whole year seems to me like one long feast day. Yes, everything smiles at Carmel, even the walls of its enclosure.

Again, we have Mademoiselle de MacMahon's description of the recreation :

We have a whole hour when we laugh wonderfully, working all the time, as we sit on our heels on the ground, but that doesn't in the least constrain the spirit and the heart. They are free and open and enjoy themselves thoroughly. We talk agreeably of whatever is likely to interest each other.

It was very often Madame Louise who was the source and spirit of this gaiety, as we learn from one of her companions : "She puts a spirit into our recreations and we laugh so heartily that I sometimes go away quite tired." She taught and held the necessity of these pleasant outpourings : "Let us rejoice," she said, "it is St. Paul's precept, and I find that gaiety gilds the pill of austerity."

She seized every opportunity to amuse the nuns. While still a novice she asked for the revival of the traditional privilege of the feast of St. Martha. On that day the lay-sisters gave up the service of the house and were replaced in the kitchen and elsewhere by the novices. Now the Princess had often at Versailles seen her father exhibit certain culinary principles. He would put on a white apron and cook his chocolate at his daughter's fire, but she had not taken in the great art. Here, as the senior novice, reigning for once over the stove, she exercised her

power with more gaiety than knowledge, directing, without experience, the talents of the inexperienced. She wished to give the lay Sisters, who were resting for the occasion, a great feast. She knew that sugar, forbidden every other day, was allowed on this, and imagined that it ought to take the place of salt altogether, so she sprinkled it liberally over cauliflowers and fish, and triumphantly served the delicious repast. We may readily believe that the feast was a success, and that if the Princess's cooking was hardly in accord with the prescriptions of Vatel, at least it raised a hearty laugh, which was all she wanted.

We find it wise to relate these innocent amusements, because so many pretend that Louis XV.'s daughter was of a sour, stiff disposition ; that she was hard and energetic, without any of the gentle grace of laughter. We have seen that those who judge thus quite mistake her true character. The solidity of her style and judgment do not at all prevent her from often expressing herself feelingly and even in charming poetry. The frivolity of a young nun was censured before her. "Watch," she said, "you will see that this little butterfly will at last burn its wings at the fire of holy love." One of her companions was preparing for her profession and Madame Louise sent her this little note, which might have emanated from the pen of the amiable St. Francis de Sales :

Good morning, little white hermit. How do you feel at the entrance to the desert? I pray God that your path may be all bordered with roses, which will so smother you with their delicious perfume that they may blunt all the thorns by which they are accompanied. I am happy ; you have started for solitude cheerfully and with great courage. Do not be afraid of the trials you may meet with. Your Divine Spouse, who awaits you, knows how to compensate you a hundredfold. Even now, for ten successive days, He is about to unite Himself to you in Holy Communion. His

love will not let Him wait till you have given yourself to Him. How happy you are to consecrate yourself to Him so young! Pray for her who could not give herself to Him till she had reached the age at which He died for us.

Elsewhere she teaches that peace is to be found in openness of heart.

All that comes not from God is of no avail, and scruples do not come from Him. Let us not make our conscience lax but peaceful. Sadness and an unquiet conscience belong to the world and its partisans, but religious should carry the Saviour's yoke with more love than fear.

One of the innocent games which enlivened these recreations in Carmel was the composition, in common, of pious songs, or rather canticles. In her letters Mademoiselle de MacMahon has transcribed some of these verses. Parnassus would have lost little had she not taken the trouble. We do not know how much Madame Louise may have helped in the composition of these couplets. They have at least the grace of simplicity, and were it not for their tone of reverence would differ but little from the effusions of some shepherd boy:

I carry the Cross upon my back,
How pleasant is my part!
It is a soft and lightsome pack
For any generous heart.
I would not change my state
For all the world so wide;
Could any doubt the battle's fate
When God is on my side?¹

¹ Je porte la croix sur ma dos,
Que je m'estime heureuse!
C'est un doux et léger fardeau
A l'âme généreuse.
Je ne changerais pas d'état
Pour toute chose au monde;
Peut-on redouter le combat
Quand un Dieu nous seconde?

The stanzas multiply on great feast days. For that of St. Louis, Madame Louise's patron, Mademoiselle de MacMahon calls a relative to the rescue :

I have been asked to make some verses for this feast. I am much tempted to ask you to do them for me. On feast days one requires to have a poetic genius, which is not at my command. I wish then, dear godmother, that you would make me five or six couplets to a very lively air, and that you would set them to music for me, for we have musicians here. Above all, make the heart speak, for it is the Carmelite's language, and it will also give scope to your delicacy of spirit. Do not refuse me this pleasure ; it is the first, dear godmother, and I shall ask you for nothing more.

But the godmother escaped and the Carmelite had to do it herself . . . to the air of "Dans ma cabane obscure."

Charming solitude in thee
 My happiness I find,
 In thee may my study be
 To please my Saviour kind.
 Here, in the silence,
 I think upon His law ;
 I live in His confidence,
 Thinking of self no more.

It is a refuge very sweet
 And overflows with charm,
 Sweet peace here pursues my feet,
 Here I am safe from harm.
 Virtue and Innocence
 Harmoniously maintain
 The amiable assurance
 That saving love doth reign.¹

¹ Charmante solitude
 Tu fais tout mon bonheur,
 Avec toi mon étude
 Est de plaire au Seigneur.

The artless composition of pious couplets was not at that time confined to the poor Carmelites. Religious poetry in the eighteenth century had singularly degenerated since the preceding century : its form was really too familiar. It would be useless to give many examples, but to satisfy curiosity, here are verses recently quoted in an edifying work by Père Jacques Terrien, the fragment of a rather curious canticle "On the Wine of Suffering," composed by a young religious of that time, a well-regulated, thoughtful, and well-read young man :

This wine pays our ransom
And opens our prison.
Good ! good ! good ! how good is this wine !
Mortals come drink of it.¹

We need not pursue the subject. These artless poems show forth at Carmel, as elsewhere, the candour and simplicity of pure souls, passing away the short hours of recreation and rest by such simple pleasures.

Ici, dans le silence,
Je médite sa loi ;
Je vis en confiance
Ne vivant plus pour moi.

C'est le plus doux asile,
Il est rempli d'appas.
J'y suis toujours tranquille
La paix y suit mes pas.
La vertu, l'innocence,
En maintient la douceur,
Et l'aimable assurance
D'être aimé du Seigneur.

¹ Ce vin paya notre rançon
Et nous délivra de prison.
Bon ! bon ! bon ! que ce vin est bon !
Mortels venez en boire.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHAPEL

EVERY place in Carmel was a place of prayer. The Chapter room, the cell, even the refectory, were filled with the silent and perpetual colloquy of the soul with God. There were also several little oratories, called in the language of the cloister "hermitages," where Madame Louise and her companions often prayed. One of these, which was consecrated to the mysteries of the Passion, was so much frequented by the Princess that even when she was long gone it was called by her name. But she prayed at greater length in the chapel. The Carmelites' choir is always separated from the rest of the Church by a grating over which a curtain is often drawn. Every time a religious enters it, she prostrates and kisses the ground. Seven hours of each day are consumed in prayer, psalms, offices, meditation, and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. At five o'clock in the morning prayers; at nine, Mass and the Canonical hours of the day; later on, Vespers and Compline; at nine in the evening Matins, often lasting till eleven. Madame Louise's love and zeal for the Blessed Sacrament was shown long before her entrance into Carmel. The Duke de Luynes relates in his *Mémoires* that once when she was quite young, passing the Church

of St. Roch with her sisters, she saw a priest, bearing the Holy Viaticum, coming down the steps. She immediately got out of the carriage and threw herself on her knees in the mud, to receive the blessing of her Lord. One day at Versailles, hearing some people censuring the Church for spending so much money on pomp and magnificence, and professing the belief that God being a Spirit does not care for exterior splendour, she replied before several witnesses: "Yes, certainly God is a Spirit; but He was a Spirit, too, when He commanded Solomon to build Him that famous temple, the glory of which has never been equalled. God is a Spirit and a Spirit alone, but He knows that we are both body and spirit." From the same time dates this Eucharistic prayer:

If I may not, O my God, like some happy souls, sojourn always in the shadow of Thy Sanctuary, at least let me come to it as often as I can. When far from the temple of Thy glory, I shall often in spirit be transported there. I will look on Thee there by the light of faith; I will adore Thee there in the depths of my heart. I will a thousand times repeat, May the Blessed Sacrament of the altar be adored and praised!

When, at the age of twenty-four, Madame Louise came to Paris for the first time, she wished, says Barbier's *Journal*, to visit first Notre Dame and then St. Geneviève's (1761).

At St. Denis she found complete happiness in her chapel. She went twice a week to Confession and received Holy Communion every day.

All the strength of a Spouse of Jesus Christ comes from Communion. The shortest and surest means she has is Communion; the most powerful help against her enemies is again Communion. The Real Presence of our Divine Spouse enlightens and purifies the conscience, opens wide the heart, and banishes from it the enemies

of sadness and vain scruples, that confidence and love may reign there alone.

Can we say that Madame Louise passed her long hours of prayer in that exaltation of soul which borders on ecstasy? No ; neither her writings nor words reveal that our Princess was one of those predestined souls whose intercourse with God, even here, was filled with such delicious consolations. On the contrary, she confessed that she was not sustained by mystical consolation ; that in devotion and sacrifice she felt a heavy dryness. She did not complain : her calm, firm, settled spirit accepted dryness without discouragement. She strove with ingenious piety to discover the spiritual advantages of this unpleasant state :

Our painful state is our penance ; not our own choice, but that of Him to whom we wish it to be acceptable ; therefore it is the best we could make, and we must be happy in that He deigns to impose it Himself. Our tranquillity and confidence, far from being diminished, should be augmented.

This state of soul of which we complain is the very thing to detach us from the world and lift us towards heaven ; there we shall belong entirely to God, with no more trouble, no more work, no more contention of mind, and no more tepidity. . . .

The state of dryness we sometimes experience is perhaps a special mercy of God. When we are going on in the way pleasing to ourselves we are tempted to pride if men praise us. What might not happen if God Himself were to show His approbation ? And are not these sensible graces of which we are deprived the signs that God is pleased with us ? Are they not praises from God ? But how flattering they are. One must be very strong to stand them. St. Paul even feared to succumb to them, and they were only given to him with a terrible counterbalance, as a ceaseless warning to him to be humble. Let us then bless the mercy of God, which spares us this temptation and leads us by roads which are difficult perhaps, but surer and less dangerous. . . .

If we feel our devotion growing cold, it is only a warning from God : a warning to keep us humble ; to keep us on the watch to

renew ourselves. From this point we must start afresh, with fresh courage and fervour, recognising that God is always just, that it is always our fault when He deprives us of consolations. We must ask humbly for them; not for our own satisfaction, but to help us to serve Him better, yet submitting if it be His will to do without them all our life, contenting ourselves in that case with begging Him to give us all the strength we need.

If dryness of heart caused Madame Louise little inquietude, she was afflicted that the sanctuary where she prayed was so poor and bare, and she therefore, thanks to her Royal nephew's generosity, worked hard to reconstruct it in a worthier manner. M. Mique, First Architect to the King, and restorer of Trianon, was given charge of this work, with special orders not to work on Sundays.

What disturbs me is that when the Church of Versailles convent was being built, neither the nuns nor even my sisters could prevent the men working on Sundays and feast days. I warn you I won't have that, and now is the time to speak of it. It would be better that it should take a year longer to build than that the precepts of God and His Church should be disobeyed. Yes, I should a thousand times rather never see our church rebuilt, and run the risk of its falling on us, than allow such a profanation as that in our dwelling. No one need say that it is the men's own business; it is ours to oppose it, and to take those workmen who follow the precepts of the Church, and to make shift with them. So be quite certain; make M. Mique promise it.

Her piety was greatly interested in this lengthy work.

Our church is beginning to take shape. The topmost stone is being raised to-day. We are all praying for the workmen. A finger was crushed the other day; it was very pitiful.

The work took four years: the first stone was laid in 1780, and the church was consecrated by M. de

Juigné, the new Archbishop of Paris, on the feast of St. Theresa 1784.

The edifice consisted of a cupola, flanked by four arms, with a flight of steps in front; it had a Greek peristyle, with fluted columns and a Corinthian frieze. It was a miniature reproduction of the Pantheon, which was being built in Paris in honour of St. Geneviève. On the right was the nun's railed-off choir, ornamented with severely plain wainscoting. The elegant little dome was crowned by a simple light ornamentation; the most important exterior decorations were gilded, like those which shine on the cupola of the Invalides. The interior was all white, and its handsome columns, the flowering panels of the dome, its ornamental sculptures and garlands, delighted the eye. The sculpture of the pediment represented the Adoration of the Magi; that over the entrance St. Theresa being carried by angels.

Madame Louise provided the church with the objects for Divine worship; we have already seen how she bought the sacred vessels and ornaments that her holy friend the old Bishop of Amiens sold that he might help his people of Abbéville after the fire. The cross and altar candlesticks were given to St. Denis by the Pope. They were of silver, of great artistic value, and had belonged to the Church of the Roman College, served by the Jesuits. When the Society was suppressed, Clement XIV. did not wish the crucifix and candlesticks to be sold. He desired them to be used in the new chapel of St. Denis. The French Ambassador, Cardinal de Bernis, received these silver articles, placed them in caskets and transported them to Marseilles, under an escort of Royal marines, commanded by the Chevalier de la Clavière, naval lieutenant, who, according to orders, personally accom-

panied the cases to St. Denis. The transport cost six thousand francs. The candlesticks were two metres high, the cross over three metres. The Pope had ordered a fourfold medallion of wrought silver to be attached to the cross, representing St. Augustine, St. Louis, St. Theresa, and the arms of France. He enriched the cross with large indulgences.

With the intention of rendering your prayers for us more fervent, we attach to the crucifix we send you the salutary benefit of a plenary indulgence for the solemn feasts of Our Lord, Our Lady, Sts. Peter, Paul, Louis of France, Theresa, your holy Mother, and we accord, in virtue of our Apostolic authority, the effect of these indulgences to you, to the religious, our dear daughters in Jesus Christ, and to all the faithful, who, after confession and communion, pray fervently to God before this blessed image.

But Madame Louise valued more than these rich ornaments other treasures, gathered together in her dear chapel with loving solicitude: the relics of the saints. She possessed a thorn of the crown of Christ, a fragment of the column of the scourging, a finger of St. Theresa and some beads of her rosary, given by the Carmelites of Gênes; relics of St. Donat, invoked against lightning; of St. Anne, St. Elizabeth of Hungary; the rosary which had been her grand-aunt's, the blessed Jeanne of France, the daughter of Louis XI., presented by the Sisters of the Annunciation; and we hear Madame answer a pilgrim, who asked her to give him commissions for Rome: "Nothing but to bring me a reliquary of solid copper, containing relics of saints of the Society of Jesus."

Besides these relics the Princess had in her chapel the entire bodies of certain saints. Clement XIV. had sent her, through Cardinal de Bernis, the body of St. Valechey. Then the Abbé of St. Sulpice

brought her from Rome the body of the martyr, St. Vincent. The Bailli de Breteuil, Ambassador of the Order of Malta at the Court of Rome, obtained St. Martial's body for Carmel. The Princess of Stolberg, Countess of Albany and wife of Prince Edward, the young Pretender, sent her from Rome the body of St. Innocent. M. de MacMahon, Knight of Malta, sent the body of St. Justine from the same place. Then the Carmelites of the Netherlands, emigrating to France, sent her the body of St. Albert, Bishop of Liège, for which she had thus asked :

I charge you to ask for St. Albert's body, which was taken from Rheims. Pay whatever the shrine may be worth, if necessary. It is right it should return to France. Furnished with the authority of the Archbishop of Malines, you will seal it with his seal and enclose it in a wooden box, which you will stamp with the same seal. . . . This is no triumphal translation but a simple removal.

She was also offered the body of St. Colette by her followers, the Poor Clares, exiled from Gand ; but having accepted their gift, she gracefully returned it to them to the Monastery of Poligny which sheltered them.

We beg the Abbé Reynaud of St. Sulpice to send to the Monastery of the Colettines of Poligny the venerable body of St. Colette, which we make a gift to the said monastery.

Alas ! what became of the Carmelites' beautiful church, the object of so much love and care, after Madame Louise died ? In 1793, by order of the Convention, the great silver candlesticks and cross were taken to the Mint, the nuns were dispersed, the relics and shrines violated. The Carmelites' property was then divided into three parts : one, consisting of the gardens and outhouses, was legally confiscated ;

a second part, the monastery, became the property of the war department and was turned into a barracks; and the third part, the church, became the property of the town of St. Denis. The Carmelites of the old monastery, separated during the Reign of Terror, returned under Napoleon I. and established themselves in the Rue Cassini in Paris; then in 1839 at Autun; finally, in 1859, they were able to buy back their old monastery, but did not recover the outhouses. As for the church, a cruel wall separated them from it; it was not restored by the municipality, and remained a chapel of ease in the use of the parish clergy. At one time the nuns hoped that the town of St. Denis would sell them back their church, and the generosity of some pious people assured them of a part of the great sum necessary for its purchase. But the business was adjourned: the secular clergy believed that the church was still useful to the parish; and later on, when this difficulty had disappeared, the municipality, who had now become Radical, refused to carry out the bargain formerly agreed upon, and the nuns had to give up hope. It certainly does not appear that the resistance of the secular clergy profited them much. Since that time the church was taken from them by decree, in April 1895, and the following year it became a court for the Justice of the Peace—a truly splendid court. It has ever since remained a court, happily without losing its religious sculptures and with no other addition than a bust in front of the door, wearing the “bonnet rouge” of the Revolution. But before sheltering this Justice of the Peace, the church had served as a club for fiery Socialists; so that the poor Carmelites, who had longed for the wall separating them from their church to be demolished, now thought that it linked

them too closely to the profane. Indeed their rule forbids them to have their convent attached to any other building: it should stand alone amid the grounds and be surrounded by a wall. At St. Denis, when God was their neighbour, it did not seem wrong to the nuns to be joined to His house. But now when He was replaced by very different occupants they could not remain. They left St. Denis, provisionally, seeking shelter at Versailles, in the town where Madame Louise was born and baptized, and in a place which had formerly been dependant on the palace, and so had been sanctified by the Princess in the earlier years of her life. But their hearts remained attached to that chapel of St. Denis where a Princess of France had taught them to pray for their enemies, saying:

Those who calumniate us praise us better than those who flatter us, and when we pray for our benefactors we must have them particularly in mind.

CHAPTER X

HER WORK

IN Carmel, Madame Louise was not always absorbed in prayer and contemplation. She was constantly occupied, and worked with great activity.

To work and pray, that is our vocation, and if I remain with my arms folded for one moment I shall cease to be a Carmelite. . . . Scarcely have I finished one thing than I feel that God is calling me to do another, and then another, so that I cannot be inactive a single moment. . . .

If I fold my arms, what becomes of the spirit of poverty? The poor work through necessity, the Carmelite should work through duty—paradise is worth that much. . . .

When I feel tired and tempted to do nothing, I look at the cloister, where my body shall rest till the last judgment. This thought gives me courage, and I no longer think of minding cold or heat.

Thus energetically she took her part in the humblest and heaviest duties, stitching and sewing without much art, if we believe herself; for listening to the criticism of another nun's sewing she said: "You might make the same complaint of me. They say that her father, like mine, has forgotten to include sewing in her education."

She served in the refectory, trimmed the lamps, swept and polished the floors, and all without complaining, saying to a less valiant companion: "Yes,

dear Sister, always to scrub, sweep, make oneself comfortable, mortify oneself. We shall hold on to all this together, you and I. And some day we shall feel happy in saying, 'And this till death.'"

She helped to look after the garden and the cows, to churn the butter, and gather in the vintage and the crops. She washed and spread out the linen, and was quite unhappy when forbidden to spread heavy wet things on the line: "It is my hump that makes them wish me not to carry the heavy things."

She had her turn in each of the various employments of the house. She wrote once:

I am third sacristan. I fill the altar cruets, wash and fold the linen, ring the bell for Mass, and all the other offices in church.

One of her companions, knowing the Princess's aversion to the smell of tallow candles, cleaned the soiled candlesticks for her, and was afterwards thus gaily reproved:

You really sadden me. This occupation pleases me more than you can think. I have always been very fond of mutton, and in condemning myself never to eat it again, I have at least, in the discharge of my duty, the pleasure of enjoying its smell.

Another day, when it was her duty to help in the kitchen, she made a funny mistake, which Mdlle. de MacMahon, who saw it, recounted at the time:

It was her turn to wash the dishes, and unused as she was to this duty, she took the large kettle and plunged it in the water with the other dishes. When this delicate article was seen in the water, a cry arose in the kitchen which made her hastily withdraw the kettle. Just then I came into the kitchen, and said to the Princess: "Madame, are you trying to clean the outside of the kettle?" "Yes," she said; "I want to make it like the inside." "Give that up, I beg," said I. "You would not have finished for a very long time." She began to laugh. You can judge what a state her hands were in; that is what amused her so much.

If the state of her hands was deplorable, that of her dress was not less so. It was the simplest Court robe she possessed, and was of pink silk. The postulant had to wear it till her reception. A part of this dress, which on this occasion must have looked like a chimney-sweep's coat, has been preserved.

To prevent Madame from undertaking work too hard for her, they had sometimes to have recourse to small stratagems, and would say to her: "Why do you tire yourself so much when you succeed so badly, and the work has all to be done again after you? You only throw things back."

One of her favourite duties was the care of the sick. She herself was hard on her own weakness, and taught that sickness and suffering should be energetically resisted. She did not wish any one to succumb weakly, and preached by her own example.

When I first came to this house, had I listened to myself I should have been always ill: the bell rang for office, I had a bad headache; the time for prayer drew near and I felt very weak. But I did a little violence to myself. I went to office and prayer. I was only there a short time till my sickness became bearable, and soon I forgot it. In summer, when we rose early, I felt something wrong with my heart, which made me long for sleep. I was careful not to go to sleep, and was cured when I had taken the air out of doors. I tell you all this that you may watch against your body, which loves comfort; against the devil, who would keep you from our holy exercises; and against the charity of our Sisters, which is often so careful of the needs of our bodies that it might become hurtful to our souls. A religious should not too easily believe herself ill, and when she is only too easily indisposed should silently rejoice that she has something more than her Sisters to offer our Divine Spouse.

Nevertheless she felt the deepest sympathy with those who were really sick. She had an infirmary built, cared tenderly for the sick, made their beds, and

helped them in all their needs. One day a Sister pushed away some nasty medicine. Madame seized the glass and drank half of it, then the nun was ashamed and finished it. For two years, unknown to the others, she dressed the painful sores of one of her companions. She reserved to herself the exclusive care of a blind and infirm nun, aged ninety-one, called Sister Martha. She washed, dressed, and fed her, and attended to her ulcers, and often would she kiss them with loving compassion. Her hidden devotion to the sick was found out, and she was implored to look after herself better.

She writes :

I wish, father, that you would not believe so easily everything you hear against me, for instance that I am killing myself looking after the sick. I do my duty and no more, and you see God blesses it, for I have not been indisposed at all. One must sometimes trust to Providence.

Besides these works, Madame Louise filled in succession several offices in the community, and in each exhibited zeal and fervour in spite of all her natural repugnance. "I have made a vow," said she ; "all that I ask God is that I may never go out of my way either to ask for or refuse anything."

She was Depositary, Mistress of Novices, and Prioress. In Carmel the Depositary manages business affairs and regulates expense. The Princess had never kept accounts in her life, but she took her part with a good grace.

I am glad that it is nothing more than writing and keeping accounts. It is not what I used to like, but, with the years, tastes change, and I find that obedience sweetens everything. . . .

When one does one's duty, the heart is always happy. I only wish the days held more than twenty-four hours, or that I might be allowed to sleep an hour less.

She became quite a good manager. She wrote concerning her housekeeping :

There is no fish, and Lenten provisions are fearfully dear. That is bad in this year when we have for the first time so many to feed, but it is a good thing that we should experience charity as well as give it. Madame the Depositary has to manage. You know who this Depositary is ? It is your very humble servant.

She spent eight francs a day on fish, and sold the best products of the garden. All this administration was difficult enough, for the garden was about four acres and the field ten. The grass in the lanes and walks was allowed to grow freely, to feed the cows ; the rest of the ground grew grain crops. We know, too, that they grew black-currants ; for, according to the custom of convents at that time, they made an excellent cordial, which they themselves never tasted, but gave to friends and to the sick poor.

The Depositary wished to buy from the Versailles servants the old Royal linen, which, she said, could be turned to good account.

These sheets, discarded by the Court, are not at all to be despised ; they are of good and handsome linen, and will be of great use to us in the sacristy and elsewhere. I intend to write about them to Adelaide, so that she may inquire about them. Then we must see about their price, which must be very low, in spite of their value.

The Royal Depositary kept herself well in the background for very prudent reasons.

In bargains I appear as little as I can, to prevent the mistake many people make, who instead of seeing Sister Theresa of St. Augustine, purveyor for the poor Carmelites, see Madame Louise of France, who can pay well for what she wants.

She discussed prices :

Remember, I beg, in your commission that the poor daughters of St. Theresa must have their purses saved. You should understand that we seek less brilliancy than solidity. With us, what lasts longest is always the most beautiful. . . . It is not of the quality we have had to complain, but a little of the price, which appeared to us too high for Carmelites, who, for their fuel as for their clothing, should always select the commonest.

One day when a carpenter brought a panel to fix up, Madame Louise perceived that it was covered with moulding ; she had ordered it to be quite plain, and she said so. The workman excused himself : he thought that for the monastery of a Royal Princess nothing could be too fine.

“Take it away ; take it away,” cried the Princess.

The poor man represented that the wood would be wasted.

“Well, if you cannot pass off the moulding which does not suit our houses on your grand people, put it against the wall.” And the panelling was put on back to front. Another tradesman, the glazier, thought it would be right when working for a Princess, even in Carmel, to follow the taste of the day. Just at this time, fashion, abandoning the Louis Seize style of little diamond panes, had begun to adopt, as more elegant, large plain ones, and these the glazier put in the windows of St. Denis. The costly novelty greatly displeased the Royal trustee. “What !” said she ; “expose the Carmelites to the danger of breaking large expensive panes. No, no, that is not poverty ; we must have the little diamond panes.” And she had each pane divided into four. Into even the smallest details the Princess brought this scrupulous regard for monastic poverty.

One day, for instance, Louis XV. visiting his daughter

asked for lunch. She went to the infirmary to get him a pot of jam, on which was a paper cover tied with string. The King cut the string and threw it away. His daughter cried out gaily, telling her father he was careless of the rule, and that for economy the string should be untied, and then it could be used again. The next day, as a penance, the King sent an enormous ball of string to St. Denis. It filled a cask which was large enough to load a barrow.

Madame Louise filled, with marked success, another office, perhaps more in accord with her rare talents of mind and heart than that of economy: the direction of the noviciate. This devolved on her from the day after her profession. She was greatly astonished, but obeyed without a word. Her novices, happily, preserved many of her instructions. From their recollections it is not difficult to build up the teaching their mistress gave them.

"It must," she said, "appear as surprising to you as to me that I who yesterday was one of you, am to-day placed at your head. How embarrassing this is for me. Do not expect to hear me speak eloquently of your holy obligations. No, I should not know what to say to you; but, with the grace of God, I shall do it, and we shall encourage each other to the 'practice of our holy duties, to the extinction of our faults and the acquisition of virtues.'"

Her personal feelings and the fruit she drew from her position were most edifying.

I acknowledge to you, father, that there is no better school of virtue than the obligation of teaching it to others, and our noviciate is so fervent that it makes me ashamed to think that I preach to those who are better than myself. Since our Mother has placed me over them, I cannot tell you how useful it has been in correcting many things in me. . . .

I have not a moment to myself, charged with the care of thirteen novices, so fervent that I must constantly study to

moderate them. My only difficulty is when it is necessary to make them rest. To the strongest attraction for prayer, they join an immense zeal for painful works. They would swallow like honey all the works of mortification allowed among us, if one did not exercise great prudence to restrain them. . . .

I cannot see my novices without feeling myself encouraged to the service of the Lord. Their fervour rises up against my cowardice. I give thanks to Divine Providence for having surrounded my feebleness with this little group of angels, who breathe only the pure love of God, and who, though they are a cause of shame to me, are also my joy. . . .

I look on my novices as so many mistresses, whom our Lord, in His mercy, has given me to teach me to be humble, mortified, courageous, penitent, and fervent.

And she asked her spiritual daughters to pray for her, showing how much her sanctification concerned them.

Is it not true that if I show you a holy example, you will be less careless? If I more diligently cultivate your hearts I shall see there no more tares among the wheat. If I instruct you better in virtue, I shall be happy in seeing you practise it better. If my prayers for you are more fervent, they will obtain grace for you to be more faithful to the holy rule. Do you not then see how it concerns yourselves to ask for my sanctification, for fear my negligence and sins should be an obstacle to God's designs for you.

To which she modestly adds :

If there should be among you any who deserve reproof, it is I who should be reproached and who should first reprove myself. If you are not all you would wish to be, it is doubtless because I cannot say to you, like St. Paul, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."

As to the lessons addressed to her charges for their formation to the religious life, they are full of fruit to any who read them. She instructed them first as to their vocation.

God does not wish that your having taken the first step should be the reason for your continuing in the religious life without a most positive vocation. The call of God is free on His part. Often it falls not on the holiest, but the weakest. The way to know if one is called by God is to see if one has the proper virtues for the state; if not as yet in practice, at least in the aptitude and good will shown in works. Reflect well on it. Have you the strength and courage to practise during your whole life what has cost you so much in your noviciate? All that I can tell you is, that in the state I have embraced I am happy beyond all my hopes; but to assure you that the state which is my happiness would also be yours, I should have the gift, which I do not possess, of reading your minds better than you do yourselves. The only advice I can give you is to consult the Lord, praying Him, with fresh ardour, to be your light. I recommend you to do nothing new till you have first begged the light of the Holy Spirit by fervent, assiduous prayer, so as to know and to follow God's will for you. We can do without riches and noble birth, but nothing will take the place of our true vocation.

She warmly begged for the confidence of her children, which she feared might be frozen by respect for her birth.

It has sometimes occurred to me that the demon, ever ready to harm us, might try to lessen the confidence you should have in me, as in your Mother. Thus instead of looking on me in the light in which religion wishes you to consider me, you might recall what I was in the world, making a phantom to frighten yourselves. You would say to yourselves: "If my mistress were another I should open my heart to her, but I dare not speak so freely to one who used to be 'Madame Louise'" In the name of God, my Sisters, may not one of you ever give me the sorrow of learning that she has listened to such a thought. It would be a diabolic temptation and enough to cause the ruin of a soul.

Later she came to the great teaching of Carmel, penance, the Cross.

You will tell me how hard you find it, and I shall have no difficulty in believing you, knowing how much all these things have, and do still, cost me—I who love my ease as much as any one. But

in coming here we should bring a determination to live henceforth for sacrifice alone. The secret which sweetens it for us is to think a little less of how much it costs us and a little more of its value to us.

All her directions for penance have been preserved.

You feel a dislike to one of our duties ; do not think of dispensing yourself from it even by the most legitimate means. The society of some of your Sisters is less pleasant than that of others ; redouble your consideration for them when present and your charity when absent, but so that none may guess your motive. Your opinion is disputed and you might triumph by one word ; do not utter it. Something is spoken of which is not edifying, but which would satisfy your curiosity ; avoid hearing it, if you can without affectation. A story which you know, is told inaccurately in your presence ; do not give yourself the satisfaction of establishing the facts when you have the chance. Some practices of the religious life please you less than others ; say nothing about it and observe them faithfully. You do not like certain dishes which are served to the community ; take them as remedies for your sensuality and let God alone know your secret. You are publicly reprimanded and a humiliating penance is enjoined on you ; submit willingly and humbly to both. If it happen that you are innocent when reproved or punished, oh ! then, hide that from creatures, that He alone may know whose right it is to reward.

These sacrifices were all made in spirit and in truth ; not for outward appearance, but for God alone ; secretly and in obscurity. This lesson draws a very precise theological distinction :

We see in the Gospel two maxims which at first seem to contradict each other. On the one hand, that we should do our actions before men, that seeing them they may glorify the heavenly Father ; and, on the other, that we must keep our good works secret, under penalty of receiving only the reward of the hypocrites. Our Lord means to teach us thus : that we must accomplish before men His commandments and the duties of our state without ostentation or human respect, and in the second place, that we should keep secret our works of counsel or supererogation, which are not commanded either by His law or our particular vows.

The novice mistress placed renunciation of self far above observances and practices.

State and habit will not sanctify us if we do not apply ourselves to the acquirement of great humility of spirit, a sincere love of lowliness, a perfect renunciation of ourselves and of our own will, even in holy and pious acts.

“A Carmelite,” she said, “should always be ready to confess, communicate, and die.”

The souls were happy that were fed on such strong, vigorous teaching. Their courage in adversity, afterwards showed what monastic vigour the daughters of Madame Louise had imbibed in the noviciate. Several, surviving their mistress, faced persecution, prison, hunger, and exile, unhesitatingly confessing Jesus Christ, escaping the guillotine, by God’s grace, and uniting once more in our time the broken chain of expiating and protecting sacrifice.

Many recruits came to the noviciate to hear and profit by such instructions. When, for want of room, Madame Louise could not admit them, she gave them a dowry and thus procured them entrance to another Carmelite convent. This is why the register of the Carmel of Riom calls two of the nuns “*protégées* of Madame Louise.” To the Prioress of Châlons the Princess writes: “We will pay the Demoiselle de la Porte’s dowry.” Another of her *protégées*, Mdlle. Lidoine, with whom the Princess wished to share her name in religion, and who was therefore called Sister Theresa of St. Augustine, was dowered by the Dauphine and sent to the Monastery of Compiègne. She there became Prioress, and died gloriously at Paris, on the guillotine, the 17th July 1794. She was followed to death by a phalanx of virgins, among whom was Mdlle. de Croissy and fifteen other

Carmelites. In the tumbrils they sang the *Miserere* for their murderers, and the matins of their eternal morn. When they arrived at the scaffold, they knelt before their Prioress, asking her humbly the last permission—to die.

Finally, Madame Louise fulfilled the highest office of her convent, that of Prioress, to which she was three times elected. She was elected three years after her entrance into religion, in 1773, and in spite of her sincere opposition :

I should greatly wish not to have to lead others ; I who can scarcely lead myself. I am calm, because I am obeying.

A despatch preserved in the archives of Foreign Affairs, and dated 3rd December 1773, tells us what was then the manner of voting in the Carmel of St. Denis : “ Madame Louise has had only white beans, except her own.”

Louis XV. was pleased to hear of the election, but much surprised that one red bean, an unfavourable vote, was found in the urn, and even said in his annoyance : “ In convents some one must always make herself conspicuous.” They explained that the unfavourable vote was that of Madame Louise herself. He smiled, and turning to his suite said : “ Sirs, I announce that Madame Louise has just been elected Prioress of her convent ; and what pleases me is that it has happened without her connivance, for she herself feared it.”

When he came to St. Denis, his daughter thus expressed her feelings to him : “ Dear papa, I should rather occupy myself only with my own sanctification, for though my estates are narrow, I feel that it is a great charge before God to have to govern.”

She wrote similarly to the Bishop of Amiens :

You will not be surprised to hear that I was troubled at the charge, which the friendship of my Sisters announced to me. Well! God willed it. I was elected Prioress of your former daughters, yesterday, and no matter how incapable I feel, I must obey.

She took up her burden straightway, with a settled programme, which she described in a letter to the Prioress of Châlons-sur-Saône in January 1786 :

I feel ashamed, my Reverend Mother, that you should have taken the trouble to write and consult us to know how to act when one is Prioress. I only know one thing : to follow the rule as well as one can and make others do the same, but with great charity and consideration for their faults, without falling into weakness. I confess this is not easy, and when one has to hold a chapter, and reprove a sister, above all one of the older nuns ; one would rather take a hundred and fifty strokes of the discipline at once. But St. Francis de Sales always consoles me, because he says that when we fulfil our offices as best we can, they are pleasing before God.

The exercise of her office was that of a kindly and firm Motherhood, which she thus characterised :

She who occupies the first place ought always to bear in mind that she belongs no longer to herself, but to others ; that she owes them the sacrifice of her time, her rest, her health, and, if need be, her life itself.

According to rule the priorate lasts three years. When the first three years of her rule had expired, one of her devoted friends, Père de Clorivière, the secularised Jesuit, composed, according to the taste of the time, and dedicated to the Princess, a pastoral drama, called *Zenobia, Queen of Palmyrus*. This work, in three acts, composed of simple verses, paints a State where Royalty is elective and temporary. Queen Zenobia has come to the term of her reign ; the electresses in council discuss the new election. Queen Zenobia's virtues are exposed and admired, in

terms whose allusion to Madame Louise is transparent. Finally, Zenobia is re-elected.

The manuscript of this mediocre poem, interesting by its origin, has probably been lost, owing to the disorder occasioned by the last proscription; but till then the Jesuits preserved it in their archives of St. Acheul.

Certainly the Carmelites had no need of a stimulus to their intention of re-electing Madame Louise. She was re-elected unanimously. She had hoped that it might not be so :

I shall have been Prioress for three years. At the end of this time, I greatly hope that such foolishness will not be renewed.

She mourned her re-election :

Alas! my Sisters to-day have been doubly foolish. It is true, then, that I must pass three more years before I am delivered from an office in which I acquit myself so ill.

At the end of this double period, her daughters thought even of asking the Holy See for an exceptional measure which should make her Prioress for life. This project of infringing on the rule deeply pained her :

If God reserves for me such a trial, I shall ask Him to let me die; and I confidently believe He will grant it, rather than permit such an irregularity on my account, to the prejudice of the house and the scandal of the public.

They tried to make her submit by spreading the report that the Royal family desired her election. She answered this rumour by an explicit contradiction:

You told me that you wish to know what the King thinks. I thought it best to ask him, and here is his answer; you may read it to the voters. . . .

Is it possible to imagine that it would please my sisters to see me Prioress again? They came to see me yesterday, and told me that, on the contrary, they would be glad to think of me otherwise, and that, if I wished, they would be glad to write this for me, to show to incredulous people, and I accepted their offer.

The Carmelites gave in to her determination. On 30th November 1779 she ceased to be Prioress.

This day will be the happiest of my life ; it will give me more time to study what I have preached for six years.

But she had to resume the task a little later (1786). In vain she protested.

My health needs that I should not again be placed at the head of the house. Only about a year ago I began to recover the fatigue of six years—a time of forced work for me. I look on it as a miracle of Providence that I have survived it ; but if human views are to influence the election, this miracle will not last for ever. I feel my conscience at rest when I ask you to recommend our capitularies not to elect me. My health has special need of repose of mind, which I cannot have as Prioress, and my soul has need of it also to acquire to virtues wanting to me. . . .

I beg you, father, to so order things that my wishes may be carried out. You think yourself that I may have wishes on this point. I have searched my conscience, and do not believe I act in this matter through the ambition of influencing the elections, or being too proud to submit to the will of others, nor through laziness and the fear of work, nor even through false humility, but I consider alone the good of the house.

They did not heed her this time ; she had to take command again, and she accused her daughters :

They have elected Madame Louise, not Mother Theresa of St. Augustine ; no offence to the consciences of our dear Sisters.

She was still in charge when death surprised her, and till the end she sanctified her rule by obedience, always bending her will before that of

her ecclesiastical superiors, as one of her companions testified :

They always found her dependent, distrustful of herself, asking their counsel in even the least important things, receiving their decisions with a child's docility, and executing them with the obedience of a perfect religious.

CHAPTER XI

HER FAULTS

IT has sometimes happened that in speaking of some holy personage, his historians have omitted to mention the censures of which he has been the object, the faults or caprices of which he has been accused. The biographies of the saint would thus give one to understand that from the cradle to the tomb his life was without reproach, and a tissue of praiseworthy acts. But we must remember that, in strict truth, one Man alone, the Man-God, has defied all censure, and that even the best of His creatures are open to criticism ; their true history not being one of natural perfection, but of a constant campaign against evil.

Madame Louise of France, like all who deserve admiration, was not always and in everything a model. She was not born a saint, she sanctified herself by strife. It would be childish to represent all her actions as lessons, to put them all indiscriminately into a common apology without distinguishing some from others. The best-intentioned authors have been rightly reproached for this common method of a continual flow of admiration, this desire to leave a cloudless impression on the reader's mind, in which no remembrance of human weakness may be mingled.

Surely the memory of the saints has no need of this artifice. Their heroic virtues have made them so great, that the remembrance of their temptation cannot make them lose any of their greatness. The important thing is not to hide the criticisms to which they have been subjected, but to judge these criticisms by trustworthy documents and so expose what is false.

The epoch in which Madame Louise lived was most disparaging towards religious things and people. The eighteenth century, more than any other, decried all things respectable: it did so with a grace, an elegance, a delicacy, a light and amusing wit which are more seductive than solid argument. The Carmelite did not escape the skilful thrusts of these little poisoned darts. They may be resolved into two principal accusations, pride and intrigue.

Let us see how much credence we should give to the first accusation, that of pride. We cannot deny it: the daughter of Louis XV. had a naturally haughty disposition, or at least was filled with a sense of what was due to her rank. If, however, we try to live again in the period, in the, so to speak, sacramental atmosphere of incense and of etiquette, which then surrounded the King and Royal family, we may perhaps find some excuse for an imperiousness so natural in the great, and for which Masillon so eloquently reproaches them.

Little significant actions, dating from her life at Fontevault, and recounted by Madame de Soulanges, who was charged with the education of the Royal child, reveal this undeniable disposition. One day, for instance, the little Princess, already well-versed in Court etiquette, gravely admonished her ladies for sitting down during her dinner: "Up, if you

please ; Madame Louise drinks." Another day she scolded a maid in these terms : " Am I not the daughter of your King ? " The servant, seized by a happy inspiration, at once replied : " And I, Madame, am I not the daughter of your God ? "

Once the child asked Madame de Soulanges to read her confession, which she had written out to prepare it better. This curious sin was there naïvely recorded : " I accuse myself of wishing to have been born a Turk." When asked to explain, the Princess thus developed her idea : " Yes, had I been born a Turk, I should have had great pleasure in abjuring Mahometanism ; and think what glory there would have been in the ceremony. Vanity was certainly mixed with it. I accuse myself of having thought of that vanity."

However, her writings at Versailles teach us better than these childish trifles what temptations to pride assailed Madame Louise.

May I suffer more while my heart is still susceptible to pride, the poison of all human greatness. How great is the Hidden God ! How truly great shall I be when I force myself to abasement. Thou wilt not reject the prayer addressed to Thee by my humble confidence. The publican, who confessed himself a sinner at Thy feet, merited Thy praise and his pardon. Remembering this, Lord, I implore Thy mercy. Of all the sins of which I am capable, and which I heartily detest, pride is the one I intend particularly to attack and conquer. . . .

I shall force myself to practise daily some act of humility ; to suppress some advantageous trait when I most wish to be flattered ; to leave off some adornment without being conspicuous ; to submit to a contradiction ; to be silent and indulgent when I am not treated properly ; to refuse a preference to which I have the right ; and any other sacrifice Providence shall offer me. I shall fix all my attention on profiting by them, and meriting by my humility the favourable looks of the loving God, the Rewarder of humble souls. . . .

All the teaching and conduct of Jesus Christ teaches me humility: "Be ye like Me, meek and humble of heart. If you become as little children you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Let the greatest among you make himself as the least. I am not come to command, but to obey. The grain of mustard-seed, the least among the seeds of the earth, represents My Church and the simplicity I desire from those who compose it." Such are the teachings of the Saviour, so multiplied in His Gospel, relating to the essential virtue. Such was His example, in His Birth, in His Life, in His Mission, in His Work, in His Death, even in His Sacraments.

Later on, at Carmel, Madame Louise groaned because gusts of pride still blew over her heart :

Some things are very difficult to a Capet. . . . I have always been proud, and after having left everything exterior I still find within me the foolish delicacy of self-love.

Lastly, the critics think they see in the last cry of Madame Louise, as she was dying, a stubborn remembrance of her earthly grandeur. Madame Campan relates that Louis XVI. thus spoke to her :

"Madame Louise, your former mistress, has just died at St. Denis. I have learnt of it this moment; her resignation and piety were admirable. Nevertheless, in her delirium, my good aunt recalled the fact that she was a Princess, for her last words were, 'To Paradise quickly, at the gallop!'"

Louis XVI. would seem to admit that a dying hallucination brought her back to the time of her earthly grandeur and the Royal hunts. Be this incident true or not, we do not wish to deny that Madame Louise was naturally of an imperious temper, but the important point is, did she struggle and fight against it? She did. Always, without truce, and successfully. We have seen her prayers while at Versailles to obtain a Christian humility. A *valet de chambre*, who had been at Court eighteen years, when

asked if the Princess did not sometimes show haughtiness, replied : " Not at all ; she was the best mistress in the world."

At St. Denis she once accused herself on her knees of having spoken angrily to one of her companions : " Pardon my hastiness. It is the fruit of my education ; for we Princesses are so badly brought up that we always wish to be in the right and never to be contradicted in anything. Nevertheless, I hope I shall correct myself."

Another day, M. de Longchamps, steward of the convent, persisting in standing while speaking to her, she addressed him in these words, which form a striking contrast to the haughty remark of her childhood : " What, still standing ! When you have sat down, M. de Longchamps, I shall be delighted to hear your good ideas. Religion makes all men equal ; and in society, also, two things bring together different conditions—the manner in which one is obliged, and the manner in which one feels it. One is for you, the other for me."

Once, when she was Prioress, one of her inferiors, forgetting herself, addressed a thoughtless remark to her. The King's daughter felt " the blood of the Capets boiling in her veins," but she controlled herself immediately and humbly replied : " The advice you give is so good, that even if you do not scold me I will follow it."

When, in her presence, the Carmelites showed their longing to be authorised to celebrate solemnly the feast of St. Clotilde, Queen of France, she refused to interfere : " It is true," said the Princess, " that she was the first Queen of France, but it seems to me that this demand would not come well from me, and would have rather an appearance of pride than de-

votion. I distrust everything that recalls my former rank, and I have such a great fear of it, that I even avoid good works which might recall it to me or to others. I wish I had never been a King's daughter ; it seems to me that I would have been a better Carmelite."

Pride of race ? Yes, but pride reduced, conquered by a will stronger even than blood. And when a natural tendency is thus fought and overcome, what should it be called ?

The second reproach brought against Madame Louise of France by some of her cotemporaries is that of being a restless Carmelite, mingling in worldly business, intriguing for nominations to bishoprics and benefices, annoying the Court and the public offices with her importunate agitation.

This accusation has no proof. As a Princess we see her intervention limited to acts of charity. From the Palace she corresponded with the Chancellor—she even asked for secrecy ; but she told him why, and we can see no crime in it.

You know, Monsieur, that I always choose to write to you when I have business with you, because, being secret, it will make fewer people jealous.

When she became a Carmelite, we find nothing in her correspondence which approaches intrigue. On the contrary, many of her letters formally express her resolution to serve no ambition, to recommend no candidate, not to meddle with business in any way. Nothing could be more precise and direct.

Charity still had its place. The Carmelite gave alms, but as a Carmelite :

If I am asked for alms I only give the convent alms—2 sous [1d.], 12 sous [6d.], 24 sous [1s.]. Never more than 3 francs [2s. 6d.].

She gave, and, above all, got others to give :

Having nothing more in the world, I can give no more. But it is not against the vow of poverty to beg for others. If I am refused it is of no consequence.

While on the subject of the charities Madame Louise begged for others, it is interesting to find evidence of the warm concern she exhibited for the poet Gilbert.

This unfortunate man had arrived, almost starving, at the Château de Conflans, the Archbishop de Beaumont's home. The Archbishop had given orders that Gilbert was to be refreshed, and then he held a long conversation with him under the shady trees in the park. He gave him 500 francs, and warmly recommended him to the benevolence of Madame Louise. The Princess took the poet's interests in hand, and solicited for him the favour of the Minister, M. de Vergennes. We have a letter from the Carmelite to the Marquise de Créquy, dated 15th September 1775. Here it is :

I beg you, Madame, to be so kind as to give your protection to the Sieur Gilbert, that he may obtain the first pension applicable to men of letters. I am assured that he is a young man who having great talents for poetry, has dedicated them all to the defence of religion. But I hear that he is starving, and that he could not only earn his bread with the opposite party, but could even make a brilliant future with it, like many others who have been named to me, and whose talents are not equal to his. It is a temptation from which he must be preserved. To undertake this, Madame, you have all that you need in your love for Religion and for the good of the State ; but I have been delighted to take part, as far as I can, in such a good work, by begging you to contribute to it, and by telling you that I shall consider it a real obligation.

The Princess succeeded in this charitable endeavour. She obtained several pensions for Gilbert, which all together came to more than 6000 francs. Further, the Princesses of France, granting the prayer of the recluse, gave the poet 600 francs a year, as a New Year's present; and the King, Louis XVI., ordered 50 francs to be taken to Gilbert when he heard of his illness. Thus, thanks to Madame Louise, the poet was enabled to end his life peacefully in his own home, in the Rue de la Jussienne, and not in hospital, as his last beautiful and touching verses would lead one to believe.

Though she still took her part in charity, Madame Louise wished to be free from all worldly business.

I wish to stay quiet in my corner; never to hear news of anyone, and to be forgotten myself. . . . I meddle with nothing, but say my office, sweep, and listen to my Sisters. . . . My resolution has long been taken; in renouncing everything I have even renounced doing good to others. . . .

What my protection can no longer do I hope to accomplish by my prayers; not by my own merits, but by the merits of Him to whom I am consecrated. I could not possibly recommend any ecclesiastic to the Archbishop. I have never all my life recommended any one to a benefice, and you well know I shall not begin to-day. All I can do is to pray. . . . As you know how I think, you may be quite sure I should be much annoyed if I were mixed up with the bishopric, either in a greater or smaller degree, and, thanks to God, I have never had it on my conscience. . . . I beg you, dear Mother, to make my usual answer: that I will have nothing to do with it, because I never meddle with benefices.

Even when bishops interceded she remained firm on this point. To the Bishop of Clermont, whom she greatly liked, she wrote:

I have been rarely more mortified than I am to-day at being unable to do what you wish for this place in Saint-Cyr, all the more as the young lady is a relation of yours. But you well know that

I meddle with nothing, and I have been obliged to refuse, in the same way, numbers of people who ask me to obtain similar favours for them. One must love one's state as much as I do, not to regret having renounced everything. . . .

I quite see that you could not refuse your *protégée*, to write to me on her account; but surely you could have foretold my reply, knowing what I think and how far I am from worldly business. If this had only been in the cause of religion it would have been a pleasure to me to second your apostolic zeal; but in this it is only a question of the human distinction attached to birth, and I have only come here to seek the lot of poverty and humility. I shall then be content with praying Heaven that all may turn out to the greater glory of God.

In brief, all exterior things had been renounced:

If I used to enjoy the happiness of making others happy, I have now, in sacrificing myself to God, given up even this enjoyment.

Before this obstinate resolution the petitioners had recourse to evasion: they addressed themselves to Mdlle. Julie de MacMahon, the Princess's intimate friend, begging her to intervene in their behalf. Soon, by unmistakable order of Madame Louise, she too refused to listen, saying:

Our Sister Theresa of St. Augustine particularly wishes that there should be no more talk of her in the world. As I am the receiver of her feelings and confidence, I should be more particular on that account not to ask her anything. . . . I should be very sorry for it, and it would give me great pain, but we are inundated with demands and petitions. . . . We cannot, however, do favours to every one. Further, Sister Theresa adds: "May God preserve the Princesses at the Court, that unhappy people may have recourse to them," and prays that she may be left quiet in her retreat.

Madame Campan, who rather bitterly reproaches Madame Louise for misplaced interference, writes in her *Mémoires* that all ambitious clergy flocked to the parlour of St. Denis. We must understand then

that the ambitious ones got nothing for their trouble, for we have indeed seen that many clergy came to the grating ; but we do not find that a single one of them, either under Louis XV. or Louis XVI., received the smallest advancement. As they were, so they remained. Her archbishop friends did not on her account receive Cardinal's hats ; her bishop friends did not become archbishops ; her priest friends did not become bishops : neither her beloved superior M. Bertin, nor her successive confessors, MM. du Ternay or Consolin.

Do we mean to say that Madame Louise never corresponded with the great ? Yes, she did certainly, but only for the business of St. Denis or the interests of religion. "I attend only to the business of the Order."

An occasion is often cited when she interceded at Court in favour of a certain person. The occurrence was so novel that people showed their surprise. She answered simply : "I could not refuse to give my services to this person. She was wronged through me." Except for this circumstance, Madame Louise never interfered except to serve the Order or the Church.

She *intrigued* with the Apostolic Nuncio : it was to obtain an exemption for a certain bishop, who was too poor to pay the despatch of the Papal Bulls sent to him from Rome.

She *intrigued* with the Pope : to beg for the canonical beatification of certain Carmelites who had died in the odour of sanctity, and especially of Madame Acarie (Sister Mary of the Incarnation). This rich and beautiful Frenchwoman was married and had six children ; she was delicate and overburdened with troublesome business, and in spite of

all this, she was inspired to procure for her country the example of heroic reparatory sacrifice, and introduced into France the Spanish Carmelites, reformed by St. Theresa. She enlisted the Pope and Henry IV. on her side; she triumphed over the General of the Order and over the Spanish Court, over moral obstacles and financial difficulties. She sent for six nuns, who had been taught by St. Theresa herself, established them in the Monastery of St. Jacques, which had been built for them in Paris; brought them many and excellent French novices, including her own three daughters, and thus let loose throughout all France the purifying stream. When, at the age of forty-seven, she became a widow, she entered Carmel herself as a lay Sister, and there, with her crutch, she hid herself as cook, having founded seventeen houses of penance and expiation.

Sixty years had passed since the end of this holy life. It was a life more remarkable for the wonderful work accomplished in it than even for the miraculous deeds of which it was a tissue. As the delay lately fixed by Pope Urban VIII. on the canonisation process was then at an end, it was now permitted to introduce the process for Mdme. Acarie's glorification into the Court of Rome. Madame Louise joined her solicitations to those of the French clergy to obtain the examination into this and the other causes of holy Carmelites. The recluse also interested in these beatifications the Cardinal de Bernis and the Empress Maria Theresa.

Think, Monsieur, how happy we would be to see a French Carmelite among the saints, and how our Carmelites would bless you and obtain graces from Heaven for you. . . . We are collecting money and evidence; when that is finished we beg you, Monsieur, to put your hand to the work. Difficulties do not frighten us. To

deserve beatification through procuring it for others, one must work miracles of this kind. You will work them, Monsieur! You will help us by your prayers, and I promise you that the end you propose to yourself will redouble your fervour. . . .

My sister and cousin, the steps relating to this business are confided to the Sieur Van Volden. I hope Your Majesty will be kind enough to give him your protection.

Concerning Madame Acarie, the Pope replied to Madame Louise (25th December 1782) :

Your admirable piety has suggested to you to propose to us, as the object of your prayers and of your Sisters', that the venerable servant of God, Mary of the Incarnation, founder of the barefooted French Carmelites, and called by you on that account your first Mother after St. Theresa, should be put by the Holy See among the number of the blessed, and proposed for the public veneration of the faithful. Rest assured that when the cause you recommend is referred to us, we shall bring to it all possible diligence, care, and work.

And, indeed, the decree of beatification went forth in 1791, shortly after the death of Madame Louise. This event could not then be worthily celebrated, for the Church of France was in mourning. Its Carmels had been violated, and the See of Paris usurped by the intruder, Bishop Gobel. It was in 1891, a hundred years later, that in Madame Acarie's Parisian parish (Saint-Merry) the solemn ceremonials of her canonical beatification were celebrated.

We may remark, incidentally, that at the same time the beatification of Margaret Mary Alacoque was agitated for in Rome, and that one of its warmest petitioners was a bishop, whose name in this connection leaves us nothing more to be surprised at—Talleyrand! This extraordinary man writes to the Marquise de Créquy :

It is indispensable for the good of souls that this business should be proceeded with. The decision on the preliminary quality of this

venerable servant of God has been obtained since 1737. I have verified it. It is, then, to the beatification that I must direct myself, while waiting for the canonisation. This will be the business of my successors in the government of this Church, which has been watered, made fertile and glorious, by the blood of many generous martyrs. Dare I ask you to ask the Duc de Penthièvre to be so kind as to recommend the affair to his father-in-law, the Duc de Modène, begging him to interest our holy Father the Pope in it, and to write of it to the Cardinal Secretary?

Madame Louise again *intrigued* with Rome in favour of the Carmelite friars of Charenton, who wished to separate from their relaxed brethren and to embrace the reform of St. Theresa :

It is impossible that religious attached to the rigour of their rule should practise it amongst those who do not do so, and who do all they can to have their relaxation authorised. If it is a necessary concession not to enforce on the latter the rigour of the rule, it is an indispensable act of justice to procure for the former liberty to observe it, and only a separation can accomplish the two things.

She succeeded.

She *intrigued* with Charles III. of Spain, to obtain mercy and pardon for a Spanish subject, a monk of her Order, who had committed an involuntary homicide.

She *intrigued* with the Keeper of the Seals, to hasten the publication of Fénelon's works, for which she had furnished notes :

1st May 1781.

I am greatly interested in this edition, and I now beg you to have M. Asseline, Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Paris, for censor. All is ready for printing as soon as you have appointed a censor. I beg you, Monsieur, not to keep us waiting.

This intervention of the recluse in a publication concerning Fénelon is explained by the quite legitimate suspicion which filled Christian hearts on the eve of the Revolution. At this epoch of humanitarian sentimentality, belief was only disdainfully tolerated,

and the vague pronouncements of moral philosophy and idealist theories replaced the exact precepts of the Catechism. A general tendency was shown to metamorphise the great Christians of the past, to ignore the sacred inspirations in the acts and words of the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, and to slight their religious personality. This was to show that these great Christian heroes possessed simply the magic art of oratory, the poetry of style, or the gentleness of a sweet philanthropy.

The members of the French Academy of this time (1771) vied with each other in praise of Fénelon, but their eulogiums were showered on only one side of the great Archbishop of Cambrai. Marmontel, Maury, La Harpe, academic laureates, praised "a tender heart," or "the philosophy of misfortune," but no mention was made of his faith, his zeal, or that sacerdotal inspiration which was manifest in all his acts. The image of a humanitarian Fénelon looks pale and wan beside the real man. It is "the baseless fabric of a vision," and could not have been inspired by the strong, stirring commands of the Gospel.

La Harpe's criticism was therefore denounced by the Archbishops of Paris and Rheims, and censured by decree of the Council (21st September 1771). According to d'Alembert, the Academy could only obtain that the decree should neither be announced nor posted up in Paris.

It was to react against the essential untruth of the century, and to restore to the great Christians their true features, that vigorous Christians desired to manifest the writings of the masters in all their sincerity and truth.

Madame *intrigued* with her nephew, the Count de

Provence, later Louis XVIII., for the foundation of a Carmel in Alençon. Such a convent this Prince did, indeed, protect and endow.

She *intrigued* with her nephew, Louis XVI., at that mournful time when Joseph II., Emperor of Austria, drove the poor Carmelites from Brussels. Joseph II. wrote :

Monks are the most useless, as well as the most dangerous, subjects of a State. I shall tear the mask from monasticism.

He even demonstrated his feelings on this point with delicate gracefulness. Thus Madame Campan relates that Marie Antoinette received from her brother a caricature representing some unfrocked monks and nuns pursuing reprehensible occupations. Marie Antoinette was most indignant. The Emperor's opinions soon took form in acts. He exiled the Carmelites from the Low Countries.

This odious persecution against the defenceless naturally met with Voltaire's approbation :

Joseph II. has just undertaken that reform which all enlightened men and good citizens have long desired in vain. He has successfully suppressed a great number of convents of both sexes, and some entire Orders.

Madame Louise intervened on behalf of the exiles. She warmly relates it herself :

I saw the King yesterday, Reverend Mother. He heard Benediction in our little choir with Monsieur. I told him about you and your daughters. He consents willingly that you should come and take refuge in his kingdom. I hasten to tell you to do so, that you may have no more anxiety. . . .

Our Superior will distribute them among the houses which are least poor. They quite know that having left Flanders they need expect no pension from the Emperor. Those who have one from their families will enjoy it, but we shall not insist on it. We are very happy to do this good work.

Madame Louise wished for even more—a written document, a Cabinet authorisation. She *intrigued* with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who answered :

27th April 1783.

I reported to the King the letter with which Madame has deigned to honour me. His Majesty authorises me to say that he consents that Madame should bring into France and give shelter in the Carmelite monasteries to those religious of this Order who, having been secularised in the Low Countries, desire to live and die in the rule they have embraced. His Majesty leaves it entirely to Madame touching the number of them she wishes to admit and the distribution she finds it well to make.

The Princess obtained one last benefit—letters patent of gratuitous naturalisation for all the foreign religious who should enter France.

She *intrigued* also with Louis XVI. in 1781. It was to solicit in favour of a very poor Carmel the gift of a vacant ecclesiastical benefit :

I write to the King that the Priory of Saint-Croix de Varenne (worth about 1800 francs) is vacant through the death of the incumbents. Only one nun remains. She is seventy-seven years old, and incapable of managing the estate, and I do not think a better or more suitable use could be made of it than by uniting it with the Carmelites of Riom.

The request was not considered unreasonable, since, in the King's name, the Minister Bréteuil wrote to the Bishop of Clermont :

You have at Riom a very poor Carmelite house, for which the King has much at heart a desire to procure assistance. His Majesty has charged me to make known to you that he desires you to unite the goods of the house of Varennes-sur-l'Allier to those of the Carmelites of Riom.

Finally, she *intrigued* at Rome, in favour of the threatened Jesuits. She had had the sorrow of seeing

them suppressed in several countries. She tried to temper, at least, their total suppression, so imperiously demanded of the Pope, by the Spanish Court and its allies. Before the threatening demands, which intimidated and disquieted Clement, and were a manifest presage of his final capitulation, the dejected Princess, inspired by despairing devotion, proposed an expedient, a final shift. She asked, that if to please the Court of Spain Rome should announce the suppression of the Order, at least she should reconstruct it again on somewhat modified lines. This lame contrivance seemed to certain of the Jesuits' defenders to be the last anchor of safety.

Those chiefly interested, however, preferred death, pure and simple, to any transformation of their Order. But the ardent interest which suggested this plan, the devoted sentiments of the Princess towards the persecuted, and her attempts to struggle against the decision, which had been extracted from the Court of Rome, can for no reason be a reproach to her. The foremost Christians of the day pleaded, like her, for those whom the Holy See, beset on all sides, had temporarily sacrificed. Though France and Portugal weakly followed Spain in the bitter campaign against the Jesuits, other Powers—Austria, Bavaria, the Palatinate, Poland, the Swiss Cantons, Sardinia, Silesia, the Catholic Electorates, the States of the Church, and the Missions of the whole world—rejoiced in and benefited by the services of the Society.

The preceding Pope, Clement XIII., replied to the first overtures of Spain regarding the suppression, "that he experienced a veritable horror in listening to such a request, which was contrary to Divine, natural, and canonical law," and he formally refused to have anything to say to the matter.

When the blow fell, the Church did not hide her sorrow. While the Dutch Protestants triumphantly shouted Alleluia, and caused a medal to be struck in honour of Clement XIV., the Episcopacy in all countries showed that it shared the feelings of Madame Louise towards the victims.

Thus in Austria the Cardinal Archbishop of Vienna, Migazzi, gave this beautiful testimony in their favour :

These religious, at the price of their toil and sweat, have earned the reverence and confidence of all classes and all orders of society.

At Naples, St. Liguori, the oldest member of the Italian Episcopacy, wrote :

Poor Pope! Perhaps he could not act otherwise. But were only one Jesuit remaining in the world, that one would suffer for the re-establishment of the Society.

In France the protestation was especially strong. The great Archbishop of Paris, Monsieur Beaumont, firm as a rock, replied to the pontifical notification in terms of which we transcribe the most moderate :

The memory is still recent of that General Assembly of the clergy, convoked to examine the utility and necessity of the Jesuits and the purity of their doctrine. . . . They die as died the apostles and martyrs ; but good men are disconsolate, and a severe and painful wound is inflicted on piety and virtue.

The free-thinkers saw quite as clearly. D'Alembert wrote thus to Frederick II. :

It seems to me that the Holy Father will make a great mistake in thus dispersing his regiment of guards to please Princes. It seems to me that this treaty resembles that between the wolves and the sheep, of which the first condition was that the latter should deliver up their dogs ; it is well known how things turned out for them. . . . We are assured that the Pope hesitates some-

what to abolish the Jesuits. I am not surprised. To propose to the Pope to destroy this brave army is like proposing to Your Majesty to disband your regiment of guards.

To which the Protestant Prince replied :

The Jesuits have been driven out. I will prove to you, if you wish, that vanity, secret revenge, cabals, in fact interest have done it all.

Here, then, altogether are the *intrigues*, here the schedule of the plots conducted by the Carmelite of St. Denis, the influence she exercised on contemporary affairs, of which there is any authentic trace. After these researches it is difficult to believe in the remark attributed to Marie Antoinette by Madame Campan, not in her *Mémoires*, but in her collection of curious anecdotes : “It is indeed the most intriguing little Carmelite in the kingdom.”

In so far as this word *intriguing* has been cast at her by her slanderers, it was useful to comment upon it here.

CHAPTER XII

THE END

ON the 15th of July 1762, the Bishop of Langres came to Versailles to do homage to Madame Louise of France. He was a brother of Madame de Montmorin Saint Hérem, Abbess of Fontevrault, and also of Colonel de Montmorin, and of Count de Montmorin, Louis XVI.'s Minister. The Revolution was one day to destroy all those dear to him, notably his sister-in-law, the Countess de Montmorin (*née* de Tannes), who used to be lady-in-waiting to Madame Louise, and his young nephew, Lieutenant de Montmorin, only twenty-two years old. Alone, of all his family, his niece, Pauline, escaped the guillotine. She was destined to become Countess de Beaumont, to divine genius in a shy young provincial, presented to her in her salon, to reveal Chateaubriand to himself and to the world, then to die, still young, while showing the way to glory to her brilliant young friend.

In this visit the Bishop of Langres reminded Madame Louise that he had assisted at her confirmation in Fontevrault—the ceremony was performed by the Cardinal Tour d'Auvergne, Grand Almoner, and that in memory of the event the Church and Abbey

had received some altar cruets, a monstrance, and other church ornaments.

Madame Louise, pursuing her own thoughts, remarked that she had that day completed her twenty-fifth year.

“Twenty-five years, Madame,” said the Bishop gravely; “it is half a lifetime.” He doubtless did not attach any prophetic sense to his words. But the Princess was struck by them and never forgot them, and, indeed, it so happened that M. de Montmorin’s words were curiously verified, for at fifty years of age Madame Louise died, having spent sixteen years as a Carmelite.

The convent traditions concerning her death are too precise, and have reached us too directly, to be neglected. Carmelites, living to-day, have known ancient Carmelites who had been the daughters of Madame Louise in St. Denis. Thus there is no probability of exaggerated or unlikely legend. Let us examine this oral tradition, which was either undiscovered or left in the shade by the Carmelite’s first historians.

The impiety of the Revolutionists distrusted the Royal nun’s influence on the tottering dynasty. Had her strong counsel succeeded in preventing Louis XVI. from granting the dangerous concessions which hastened his ruin, had it persuaded him to undertake the gradual accomplishment of necessary reforms and to understand his exclusive right of initiative, which could not be taken from him, by any interference, contrary to the law of monarchy, she might, perhaps, have saved France—spared the country the Reign of Terror and the odious crimes which still retard her destiny. The only exact evidence we have been able to gather about the

vigour of these private counsels from St. Denis is furnished by the *Mémoires* of Louis XVIII., and their authenticity is, to say the least, open to discussion. Here is the text :

On the 23rd November we went all together to present the Countess d'Artois to our aunt Louise ; the latter profited by the occasion to declaim against the errors of the time, and particularly accused the modern philosophy of that spirit of irreligion which is only too widespread. The King listened with deep attention, and the evident desire to please her, for in pursuing the propagators of the new ideas he persuaded himself that Heaven would lay it to his account. So it was remarked at Versailles that political and judicial measures against the sale of books were always more severe when the King had been visiting the Carmelite of St. Denis.

Rightly or wrongly her cotemporaries thought that the Carmelite's influence was great. We may question if they saw aright and did not exaggerate her rôle. At the same time the well-known qualities of her strong character might induce the enemies of all Royalty in France to think of her as the man of the family. Though it was said that they struck at her, the accusation remained vague, no name was suggested, no malefactor imprisoned or punished on the charge. But the fact of a murder or poisoning is affirmed on the best authority—that of a Carmelite nun, now dead, but who was known to people now alive.

According to her, one December day in 1787 the *tourière* brought to the Prioress a packet that a stranger had left, bearing this inscription, "Holy Relics." Madame Louise opened the packet. The second wrapping bore the words : "Relics of the Eternal Father." It contained a lock of hair covered with a whitish powder. The surprised Prioress looked at the packet, and put down her face and took a long breath to find out the nature of the powder. She

felt an immediate uneasiness, which suggested to her the idea of poison. But wishing to give no trouble, she spoke no word, but went to the infirmary and flung the whole thing in the fire. She immediately became alarmingly swollen and felt very sharp pains. The convent doctor, M. O'Reilly, was called to the grille; the Princess would only allow herself to be bled, and continued her active and penitential life. On the 21st, saying nothing to any one, she wrote to her sister, Madame Adelaide, and then to King Louis XVI., addressing the latter thus: "To my lord and nephew; to be given to him after my death."

Louis XVI. never revealed to any one the contents of this envelope.

On the 22nd the patient wished to write again to Madame Adelaide, but was obliged to dictate her letter. She still refused to allow the doctor to enter the enclosure; she received him at the grille. She wished also to go to the confessional, but her strength gave way, and the Abbé Consolin had to be taken to the infirmary.

In the evening, Dr. Malouet, who had attended Madame Louise at Versailles, and had remained in the service of Madame Victoire, was called to consultation by Dr. O'Reilly; he pronounced death near. The sick nun begged that the Holy Viaticum might be brought to her, and that she might be given Extreme Unction. After this she said to the priest: "I charge you to beg the community to forgive me all the pain I have caused them, by my irregularity, my cowardice, and my other faults."

Then thinking of the Princesses: "I beg you, tell my sisters after my death that I have always felt the same for them, and that if I obtain mercy, I will not forget them when I am near God."

Finally she addressed Dr. Malouet: "I charge you, Monsieur, with my good-byes to my sisters: you will give them my love, and tell them what you see—that I die in perfect peace. Tell them that I implore them to have good-will towards this house always, and that I recommend our doctor to them."

One of her last words was this: "I believed that the good God had still many crosses reserved for me, and see how, by His mercy, all is finished. I feel confident that He will give me Paradise! Am I not then happy! No, I could never have believed it was so sweet to die."

She died on the morning of the 23rd. The action of the poison became apparent at once: the face became quite black, and her features altered so that they could not expose her body in the church with the face uncovered, as is usually done when prioresses of her Order die. They had to put her immediately in the coffin, which, moreover, satisfied one of her humble desires.

When I think that after my death my body will be made a spectacle, I ask God that it may be so disfigured that no one may feel tempted either to show or to come to see it.

The dead woman had not told her community of the incident of the "Holy Relics"; she had confided it only to a few—the oldest and most prudent of her nuns—making them swear to keep the secret; and these, true to their vow till the dispersion of the Carmelites in 1793, did not, until that moment, relate the strange occurrence to their Sisters.

Such, in substance, is the belief of the Carmelites, positively affirmed in 1870 in one of their publications, approved by several bishops.

But we must remember that the fact of the poisoning is contested.

Thus it has been objected that no contemporary has alluded to it, that the two doctors consulted about the dying Princess formed no suspicion of the kind, that though Madame Louise had been perfectly freed from hæmorrhage by the religious regimen, she still suffered from gout and from a constant feeling of oppression, and that, consequently, she might have died a quite natural death at fifty years of age.

Until further light is thrown upon the case, the reader may choose between the two hypotheses.

However it may be, the remains of Madame Louise were interred under the Chapter room with this inscription :

Here lies
The body of the Very Reverend Mother
THERESA OF ST. AUGUSTINE
LOUISE MARIE OF FRANCE
Daughter
Of the Very Christian King Louis XV.
Prioress of this Monastery.

Her sacrifice honours religion.
Her courage proves her faith.
Her birth elevates her humility.
Her zeal upholds the rule.
Her fervour inspires love of it.
Her example softens the observance of it.
She died XXIII December MDCCLXXXVII.
In the LI year of her age.
In the XVII year of her entrance into religion.
In the III of her second priorate.

The new Archbishop of Paris, M. de Juigné, expressed the public feeling in his Lenten sermon (1788).

In the midst of the injuries inflicted upon us on all sides, the Divine Goodness seems to have arranged a consolation for us in the virtues of the august virgin who has been giving to the world the example of such a generous sacrifice, and who has sustained it till her last sigh with such constancy and magnanimity. While her august sisters were proving by their example that Christian virtues may exist even in the very centre of tumult and the dissipation of Courts, what a spectacle, dearest brothers, to see the daughter of so many kings, the daughter of Louis XV., the aunt of Louis XVI.,—to see a Princess brought up in the midst of the glorious delights of the most brilliant Court of the universe,—joyfully embrace the holy ignominy [*improperium Christi*] of Jesus Christ, and practise, with the severest exactitude, all the observances of one of the austere Orders in the Church. What a spectacle to see Louise of France, undistinguishable from her companions except by a profounder humility than theirs, and showing as far as a soul in the state of grace can, that she carried abnegation to the perfection of the Gospel.

At the time of the Princess's death the political horizon darkened in France. Soon the storm broke. Driven from their monastery by the law of 1792, the forty Carmelites of St. Denis were thrown upon the street. They had, shortly before, laid this beautiful protest before the bureau of the National Assembly :

Lords, would you permit a house in which the august aunt of a citizen Monarch, refusing all distinction, has passed the happiest years of her life, to suffer the misfortune of extinction? . . . We know here neither the rich nor noble, and depend only on the law. . . . The world loves to publish that monasteries only hold victims, who are being slowly consumed with regrets ; but we protest before God that if there be true bliss on earth, we enjoy it in the shadow of the sanctuary. And if we had to choose between the world and the cloister, there is not one of us who would not ratify, with greater joy than on the day of her profession, her first choice ! . . . Lords, you have declared that man is free ; will you do us the favour of considering that we are so no longer ? . . . We would consider it most unjust and cruel oppression to disturb the refuge which we have always regarded as safe and inviolable.

But at St. Denis, as elsewhere, they had to submit to the Revolutionary tyranny. It does not appear, however, that these expulsions produced the desired fruit; for the Revolution drove 37,000 recluses from their convents, and in 1900 they had returned and increased to the number of nearly 90,000.

A little later, in 1793, the profanation of the Royal tombs, in the vault of St. Denis, was ordered and carried out; the Revolutionary rage did not forget the humble Carmelite. Here is the official report of the Commissioner :

On the 25th of October the workmen and commissioners went to the Carmelites, thence to extract the coffin of Madame Louise of France, daughter of Louis XV., who died on the 23rd December 1787. They brought it to the cemetery, and threw the corpse, which was quite whole, but in a state of decomposition, in the common grave to the left; her Carmelite clothes were still preserved.

At the time of the Restoration, Louis XVIII. had the common grave, in which the executioners of 1793 had thrown his ancestors, reopened. Some dust and the remains of bones were there found; these were gathered together in two leaden cases, and placed under the choir of the Royal Mortuary Chapel. If any remains of the Carmelite are to be found there, they are irretrievably mingled with many others, and the only remembrances of Madame Louise are some objects taken away by the Carmelites of St. Denis. These are fragments of clothes, especially of the famous pink dress, so much damaged by the kettle, and of her choir mantle, put on when she entered the church; an iron discipline, the fastenings of a night-cap; books, letters, a chasuble made from her Court dress, a horn lantern, her spoon, a cup, and some hair. The latter was

certainly preserved unknown to the Princess, for the infirmarian, who was charged with cutting the nuns' hair, one day secreted that of Madame Louise, which every one instantly asked for, and Madame Louise discovering this, ordered that it was all to be thrown—as there was no fire—into the ash-pit.

But did the precise report of 1793, on the violation of the Carmelite's grave, incontestably prove that the dust of Madame Louise had really disappeared?

In 1868 a Carmelite's coffin was discovered at St. Denis. It was of lead, which indicated that the deceased had been of high rank; it was placed across the cellar and surrounded with unfinished ironwork, as though it had been hastily exhumed by inexperienced hands and brought to a new resting-place. Then it will be remembered that after the publication of the Act of 1793 men worked for many days in the vault of the basilica, violating the Royal sepulchres, and that Carmel was the very last place they were sent to, so that the public were well-informed as to their odious proceedings. It is therefore possible to believe that, while the earlier profanation was in progress, respectful hands had saved the body of the Carmelite Princess from a like fate, and that the body clothed in the religious habit might have been that of one of Madame Louise's companions. These pious substitutions did, we know, sometimes take place during the Revolution. An exhumation, by inexperienced hands, must inevitably have left some traces, but these might easily escape the notice of men who had been much tried by their odious work, which could not have been accomplished unless they had drunk heavily, and most probably they were drunk when they came to Carmel.

Finally, it is remembered by some, that at the

dispersion of the Carmelites some of them obstinately refused to leave the town and return to their families; they took up their abode with a pious girl, Mdle. Broisse, and repeated mysteriously: "A treasure is to be found here, from which we will never separate ourselves."

These indications and suppositions led to the opening of the leaden coffin, found in 1868. They found there a woman of small stature, whose spine was bent to the left; the skull was that of the Bourbons.

What must we conclude from this? A priest of great authority, the Abbé le Rèbours, parish priest of the Madeleine, and Superior of the Carmelites, asked that all decision should be left to the wisest conclusions of science and the judgment of God. That is, that before deciding, they should wait for a more methodical examination of the body, and for miraculous manifestation, which should declare the authenticity of the doubtful relics.

The more impatient disputants spoke of the precision of the report of the Revolutionary exhumation, of the presence of Lenoir, Custom-House Commissioner, and considered that these were insuperable difficulties. They added that the coffin found in 1868 could not have been that of Madame Louise, because in shape it was not like those of the eighteenth century, with rectangular corners like those of our day, but quite the shape used in the seventeenth century, rounded on top to indicate the shape of the head.

In fact there were two very diverse opinions. God will speak when He wishes to be heard.

However it may be with the relics, the shrine has been preserved. I mean to say, that Catholics, who were profoundly saddened by the abandonment of the monastery, have recently had the joy of seeing

the religious life taken up again for the third time in the old Carmel of St. Denis. Though the walls no longer shelter the daughters of St. Theresa, another community, the Sisters of the Holy Family of the Sacred Heart, who from the special end of their institute might be called the Catechist Sisters of the Poor, and who, as far as women can, follow the rule of St. Ignatius, have, by special desire of Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, repeopled the deserted house of Madame Louise. They are preserving with most intelligent piety her veneration and remembrance amidst the admirable work among the people which occupies the modern community.

It is true, these new occupants of St. Denis do not rejoice in the beautiful church, so lovingly built by their Royal predecessor. This edifice still remains the Court of Justice, with a weather-cock, which ill replaces the ancient cross, on the summit of its cupola ; and the convent door, once beside its church according to the old usage, has had to be changed to the other side. The present nuns have slightly enlarged the enclosure, which, during the Revolution, was restricted on all sides. Air and light now penetrate the three galleries of the old cloister, with the elliptical Roman arches, in the style of Louis XIII. The staircase, which so frightened Madame Louise, still retains its old cord ; the old pump still raises its picturesque ironwork in the centre of the cloister ; the back kitchen, where Madame Louise strove so diligently with the kettle, is still used for washing-up ; the kitchen, where she so drolly sugared the salt cod, is unchanged but for its range ; the refectory, which witnessed her mortifications, is still used for the same purpose ; the Chapter room, where she pronounced her vows, exists still ; poor and very dark, her cell

belongs to the present Superior, well worthy to succeed her. The apartment with the mouldings which was arranged to receive Louis XV. can still be recognised, also an interior oratory dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This was the *ex-voto* promise of the distressed Carmelites, before the arrival of Madame Louise. Its painted ceiling dates from that time.

To those who love the Princess, it is a joy to see virgins of the sanctuary beneath the roof which sheltered her so long, who are enthusiastic and respectful guardians of her memory.

It has already been told, that the Carmelite children of Madame Louise took refuge in Versailles. There they work, by their prayers and penance, for their own salvation and that of France.

Nor do they neglect another duty. With their sisters, all other Carmelites, and many others, they work for the canonisation of Madame Louise. The first stage has been passed. On 14th June 1873, Pope Pius IX. proclaimed Mother Theresa of St. Augustine—Venerable. The process is now going on for her beatification, and then will come the final glorification.

The inquiries ordered by the Archbishop of Paris are pursued at Rome before the Congregation of Rites. By apostolic delegation the late Cardinal Guibert and the Bishop of Autun, now Cardinal Perraud, wrote out (1877) the canonical research of the letters and papers left by Madame Louise. The zealous and competent Monseigneur de Teil, Almoner of the Sisters of Charity at Paris, was designated official postulator.

In favour of the daughter of Louis XV. one of

her descendants has spoken. The Comte de Chambord wrote to the Holy Father. His letter is the best epilogue to the too rapid sketch we have dedicated to Madame Louise of France, in the hope of spreading abroad this beautiful memory which the world has hitherto almost ignored.

MOST HOLY FATHER—At the moment when there is question of introducing the cause of Madame Louise of France, in religion Mother Theresa of St. Augustine, your Holiness will permit the head of the family to which this pious Princess belonged, to unite his voice with those of so many other children of our Holy Church, equally devoted to the Chair of St. Peter, which your Holiness so worthily occupies. Many times in my childhood have I heard my relations speak of the great piety, profound humility, and mortified spirit of Madame Louise, who in that sad century gave the Court and the cloister examples of the highest virtue. How happy would I and mine be, and how thankful, if your Holiness would grant our request. I beg you to receive anew the homage of the filial respect with which I am, most Holy Father, the devoted son of your Holiness

HENRY.

THE END



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